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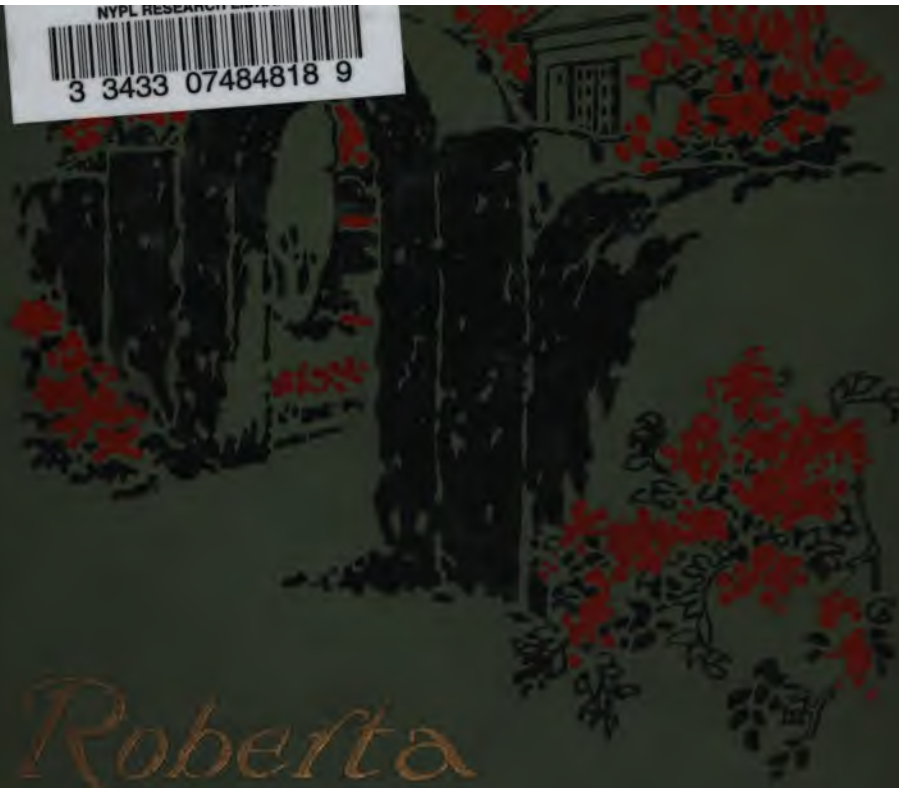
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Roberta of Roseberry Gardens

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OF
ROSEBERY GARDENS

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GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
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1930



ROBERTA OF ROSEBERRY GARDENS

BY

FRANCES DUNCAN

AUTHOR OF
"MY GARDEN DOCTOR"



ILLUSTRATED BY
JANE DONALD

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ROBERTA OF ROSEBERRY GARDENS

Roberta of Roseberry Gardens

CHAPTER ONE

ROSEBERRY GARDENS is an adorable place of a May morning. The brown old earth fairly sings with colour.

The flat ploughed land, which a few days ago stretched acre after acre in a dull monotony of nursery squares, has changed as suddenly as if the old earth were Cinderella and May were the Fairy Godmother. The commonplace has vanished. In its stead is a wonderful garden laid out on a splendid scale: a great parterre, where broad grassy paths separate wide beds of radiant colour: white, through all the shades of rose to deepest crimson, and from white again through all the yellows to flame colour and deepest orange. The only green is that of the wide paths, the young foliage of oaks in the distance, and the smooth, close-clipped hemlock hedge

that divides the azalea plantation from the drive.

The peculiar charm of it all is that these parterres of brilliant marvellous colour are not dominated by a mansion, a huge, impressive pile which might seem to say, with a patronizing wave of the hand toward the garden's richness—"Oh, yes, very handsome. These are *my* clothes; this is *my* setting—a fairly suitable accompaniment to *my* magnificence!"

At Roseberry Gardens the plants are in possession: It is the flaming azaleas, the magnolias, and all the lovely host that are the masters. As for buildings, there is an unpretentious little affair, low and almost dingy, scarcely to be noticed if it were not for the brilliant magnolia at its door. Behind it stretches a long, low packing shed, and in its side whitewashed greenhouses bury their heads. "Merely for our caretakers and nurses," say the gardens.

Instead of the lady of the manor walking along the broad paths surveying her possessions, it would be elderly workmen in blue blouse and overalls that one would meet of a May morning, probably each with a bit of a limp, for rheuma-

tism is apt to touch an old gardener. Or one might see Rudolph Trommel, short and broad, with a beard like a gnome, and a basket on his arm, going about among the plants like an elderly Troll, clipping here and there, peering carefully at each over his gold-rimmed spectacles, looking for treasure in veritable Troll-fashion, for a wonderful new colour or for some variation of keen interest, now and then touching or lifting a lovely head with adoring fingers and wonderful gentleness.

Nowhere, I believe, are plants so greatly loved as in a commercial nursery. Here they have nothing of the flippant, casual treatment that falls to their lot elsewhere. The very fact that they are to stay but for a few years serves to endear them the more. Like young folk in a family, as soon as they are well grown they must leave home to make their own way in the world and take their chance of treatment. The gardeners, like parents, stay at home and watch from a distance.

"How *could* you, Michael?" said old Rudolph reproachfully to the white-haired Irishman who, the morning on which our story begins, was

marshalling two workmen along the grass path. (The labourers were pushing a small hand-cart loaded with young magnolias.)

"How c'ud I what, Mr. Trommel?" asked the man addressed. He was cheerful and ruddy of countenance, with a moustache like Prince Bismarck's. The red kerchief knotted around his neck served to strengthen the likeness to the Iron Chancellor.

"How could you sell that Gloria Mundi?"

"Indeed, and what was it here for? 'Tis gone to Mr. Georg-rge Gold's place, and 'tis a foine position it will have there. If it had been the Glory av Hiven I'd have sold it!"

"It was the finest Gloria Mundi we had," said old Rudolph sadly, as he turned again to his work.

To a horticulturist like Trommel, plants are not for personal aggrandizement, not to make a place look handsome, nor even to show his skill as a gardener. They are as dear children to be petted, loved, cared for, each with its own peculiar gifts; each new one a thing of wonderful possibilities. There is the same intense happiness in its success, the same eager interest in its

future, the same poignant disappointment in its failure that a parent has for his child.

Because of this attitude, the gardens of horticulturists and plant lovers are not often notable for their "effects," and it is easy enough for a landscape gardener to pick flaws in them. No more care may have been taken to place a plant in an effective position than a mother takes to put a child where he will look decorative: the vital point is the plant's comfort, well-being, happiness. Old Rudolph, for instance, might remark with pleasure that a Judas tree showed wonderfully at a distance with the delicate white of Halesia for company. He may even have advised placing it there; but he cares exactly as much for the Judas tree in a row with a dozen of its fellows. "Of course," he may say, "I know the tree looks well in that spot, but I can think of a dozen other admirable positions—if one cares to try them!"

On this particular May morning, after leaving old Trommel, the white-haired Irishman led his workmen with the cart at a brisk pace along the path, past the bright azaleas, through the hemlock gateway, and along the narrow drive to the

little office building. The door opened and a young girl appeared on the threshold.

"Oh, Michael! I want you dreadfully!"

Michael stopped.

"Take them plants to the shed, b'ys," he said briskly, addressing his elderly assistants. "Here's the tag for thim; give it to Conklin. Quick! Run!" He spoke with such infectious energy that the old workmen disappeared on a brisk trot. Then he turned to the speaker with a delightful smile, and took off his old felt hat with a bit of a flourish.

"Good morning to you, Miss Davenant. 'Tis yersilf that looks like a piece of the morning!"

As she stood in the dingy doorway, the girl was good to look upon. The sunlight touched her copper hair to red-gold. She did not look more than eighteen, and the roundness of her face, the troubled look about her mouth, made her seem even younger. But there was a boyish clearness and directness in the gaze of the gray eyes and a decision in the chin that contradicted the dimple. She wore heavy, English-looking boots that had been afield already that morning,

a rough, brown tweed skirt, rather short, and a jacket with deep pockets.

She put her hand into one of these and pulled out some slips of papers.

"Whatever is the trouble, Miss Davenant?"

"Tompkins," answered the girl briefly.

"Him again!"

"He won't take the cases for the Brazil shipment—says he can't. He's half the load that Washy has, and those boxes ought to go."

"Is that all?" exclaimed Michael. He followed her into the office and went briskly through to the packing shed, where were the large wooden cases and the protesting teamster. Outside, through the doorway, could be seen the horses and the waiting, half-loaded truck.

"Ye cu'dn't manage to get the boxes on, Tompkins?" he said sympathetically. "'Tis a shame. The b'ys here will help you. Come, lads, up with them!"

"No, no!" protested Tompkins, as one of the offending boxes was almost in place on the truck, "I didn't need help to get them on——"

"I know, that's the foine man," broke in Michael; "'tis the ne'er-do-weels that are afraid

of their jobs! But the b'ys may as well help you. Come, lads, up with the other!"

"I don't want them on; I won't have them!" protested the teamster. "I can't go to all those places. I'll never get home!" (He was a small, dark man with a little chin beard, midway between a goatee and the full-sized beard worn by clergymen in the '60's.)

"Give me your list, Tompkins," said Michael O'Connor soothingly. "Pier 36, Pier 15, the *Mary Powell*," he read. "It w'ud be hard for a stupid lad or for a greenhorn, but 'tis a clever man like yersilf, Tompkins, that can do it and do it foine. Thim big cases ye'll put off first, and the rest goes as aisy as a May morning. Ye'll do it foine, ye'll plan it so there's not a hitch. Ye needn't be worried, man. Ye don't re-elize, Tompkins, what a cliver teamster ye are. But I know how ye felt," he concluded sympathetically, "fearing ye'd have to disap-p'int the young lady on a pretty morning like this! Up wid ye now! Here's yer receipts an' the ferry-money."

"How did you ever do it, Michael?" asked the young secretary as he reëntered the office.

She turned from watching the grumbling teamster as he went down the road between the great magnolias.

Michael grinned and nodded complacently as he settled the Bismarckian neckerchief.

"Molasses," he said briefly. "A bit sticky at times, but 'tis the best thing I know to make the wheels av life run smooth."

CHAPTER TWO

THE little secretary lived in a great old-fashioned house, square and white-painted, in the older part of the town. The freshet of village improvement had struck Meadowport, sweeping away the old boundaries, carrying off the trim picket fences, thrusting between the old mansions new little houses, coquettish, impertinent, and highly coloured, all gables and turrets, piazzas and gingerbread trimmings, spoiling the beautiful spacing, troubling the quietness of the wide, elm-fringed street. But the Davenant place remained unchanged. Not even a flower bed broke the smooth stretch of green under the great elm trees. The picket fence stood its ground, dividing the lawn from the garden, running beside the shady sidewalk, and reaching past the house and the garden until it met the place beyond.

The garden had not changed either. Behind the box borders were stiff little bushes of flower-

ing almond, very soft and pink despite their stiffness, and tall corchorus bushes that met over the central path. Beside the fence was a row of currant bushes with broad blades of iris coming up between; in a shady corner under the fragrant lilac bushes there was lily of the valley.

Because of its long and intimate fellowship with human folk, an old garden has a curiously charming appeal. Whatever has happened in the house of which it forms a part—birth or death, separation or meeting—there is the same sweetness and fragrance each recurring year for the household, whether saddened or gay and content. For this reason lilacs, lilies of the valley, and the little almond bushes are woven into the life and feeling with a sweetness and a poignancy that the gardenless folk know nothing about.

The Davenant house had changed as little as the garden. You passed through the gate up a walk of small rounded cobblestones to rap with the great brass knocker on the door, wide and beautifully panelled; while you waited, looked up at the large oriel window with leaded

panes. Within, the house was dim and quiet, the furniture heavy and handsome. You spoke quietly when you stepped into the great parlour —at least, the little secretary did—for the chairs and the long Chippendale sofa stood as they had stood before she was born. Even the whatnot in the corner bore the same ornaments on the same shelves: the carved ivory elephant from Japan, the boxes of sandalwood from India. Despite her eighteen years Roberta Davenant had the idea that if she did anything amiss in that room or sat in the wrong chair, the chairs and tables would know it, would express their opinion of her irreverence when she was gone, and would whisper it to her aunts.

The only modern thing in the place was Miss Roberta. She lived with three maiden aunts all over sixty, dim and stately and decorous like the furniture of the old house. In fact, the aunts with their dark curls, that should be gray, their clear pale complexions, reminded Roberta of the heavy black walnut marble-topped furniture of their bedrooms. The girl herself was more akin to the vivid colour of the garden.

Roberta Davenant had been, from the first, a surprise to Meadowport. Her mother had been even more of a surprise, for Robert Davenant, hard-working lawyer and staid bachelor until forty-three, had the experience which sometimes, though rarely, befalls a New Englander. A temperament starved and depressed broke suddenly free, sweeping his life as clear of tradition as a freshet sweeps a mountain brook of last year's leaves; and he married, after a sudden and impetuous wooing, a girl twenty years his junior, a Southerner with copper-coloured hair, vivid colour, and as gay as a bobolink on a June morning. When he brought her back to the old house Meadowport looked at her and disapproved. Meadowport feared she would make Robert Davenant unhappy; that she would prove "flighty," for with that hair and colouring one "never can tell," and Meadowport waited ominously.

But Robert Davenant grew ten years younger and radiantly happy. She brought flowers into the house, set bowls of great crimson roses in the dim corners, and later woke them to life with the warm-hearted, fiery marigolds. She

brought her violin and coaxed Miss Adelaide to play a stiff accompaniment, coaxed her to play the old-fashioned dances while she taught Robert Davenant to dance. She brought her saddle horse up from the South and made Robert ride with her early in the morning. And the good folk of Meadowport seeing them pass, laughing like children, said again that they hoped she would settle down before she ruined Robert Davenant. Even Miss Adelaide protested: "Dear child, the early morning is the time for duties, not for pleasures."

"But, Adelaide," said young Mrs. Davenant, fixing her clear brown eyes on her sister-in-law, "why did God make the early morning so exquisite if it were not that he wished to pull us out of our houses? The rest of the day isn't so pretty. You've no idea how wonderful the light on the mountains was this morning. If you would only come with us once!"

But Miss Adelaide shook her head with a reluctant smile, and hoped, like Meadowport, that Margery would "settle down." Major Pomerane, the next neighbour, hoped she wouldn't. When she sent over a plate of hot Sally

Lunns he responded with a jar of mincemeat of his own making, wickedly stiff with brandy but very delicious. But the most of Meadowport stood aloof and waited.

Serenely unconscious of the general disapproval, young Mrs. Davenant asked the frowning Meadowport folk to dine and sup. She invited with Southern readiness, ease, and frequency, and that Meadowport which was used only to invite on rare occasions, after careful consideration and much preparation, was astonished, but came. An invitation was a serious thing not to be given lightly, but soberly, advisedly, and in the fear of God. Young Mrs. Davenant, however, invited to breakfast merely because the roses were in bloom; and would have supper served on a garden table under the great elm trees because the breeze was there.

"But, my dear," remonstrated Miss Adelaide, "it has never been done!"

"How dreadfully unappreciative they must think us!" said young Mrs. Davenant.

"Unappreciative, my dear?"

"The elms," explained young Mrs. Davenant. "They have been casting those exquisite shad-

ows for a hundred years, and to think that no one cared enough to bring a supper out to have it in company with them! Don't you think it time, dear Adelaide?" Then she would put a soft young arm around the older woman's neck, her cheek against hers like a child. "Please! You won't dislike it. Truly you won't!"

And Miss Adelaide, who petted her almost as much as did Robert Davenant, would smile reluctantly. "Whatever pleases you, dear child," she said.

And so neighbours and friends would breakfast with the roses and have supper under the great elms; they came with alacrity and passed the time happily enough, but with a certain guilty enjoyment. It should not have been so pleasant to do what "was not done." And after they went home they said that "Mrs. Robert Davenant was 'different,'" and that you "never could tell," and that they hoped for Robert's sake and his sisters, that she would "settle down," that it wasn't quite right.

Poor child! She did settle down. For after two luminous years which made the first part of his life seem blank and lifeless and the last

ashes, she was laid in the little churchyard beside the decorous Davenants, and Robert was left suddenly aged and broken, more silent than ever, with a coppery haired baby in his arms.

But he brought the flowers into the house as she had taught him, the red roses and the marigolds and the tall larkspurs, and he took his baby into the garden where she played with the poppies and hollyhock blossoms and laughed and cooed at their warmth and colour. Then he, too, "settled down" to the churchyard and the little Roberta was left to her three aunts, as out of place in the dim, stately old house as a humming bird in a family of owls.

At eighteen Roberta was still considered by Meadowport as an experiment.

The Davenant ladies did their best. Miss Adelaide taught her the piano, for Miss Augusta she dutifully embroidered, but the embroidery would get taken out to the garden and lost and forgotten. Also she went dutifully to school. But always in the morning, if she were not miles away up the hill to hear the thrushes, you could have found her in the garden.

She made friends with Major Pomerane, that

elderly bachelor who was eyed askance in Meadowport, for he never went to church and he had fast horses and won prizes with them at the County Fair. From the time Roberta was ten he would let her ride anything he had, and if she was not afield on her own account she might be found over at the Major's watching his darkey groom the horses, and taking a hand at it herself, if it were the chestnut colt. If not there, she would be sure to be in the garden, poking with trowel and slim brown fingers among the plants.

She made friends with Rudolph Trommel, of the famous Roseberry Gardens, who used to stop and chat over the garden fence on his way to work, and look critically at the plants.

"Uncle Rudolph," she said to him one morning, just after her nineteenth birthday, "why couldn't I be a gardener?"

"I consider you a fery good gardener," replied the old man ponderously. "Those larkspurs are the best in town."

"I don't mean just this," she said, looking quickly around the old garden, "I mean to know really about all the plants and the won-

derful new ones, and how they are grown. Do you know the great magnolia at the old King Place, where was once a botanic garden?"

Old Rudolph nodded.

"There was a staging round it once high up and lots of little magnolia plants in pots, and they bent down young branches of the old tree and grafted them, one to each little plant. That was an old way."

"It iss in-arching," said old Rudolph, "it used to be the only way to graft magnolias."

"That is it," spoke Roberta eagerly. "I didn't—know; and I want to know how it's done now. I want to do it with these!" she concluded, holding up earth with stained brown hands and spreading out slim capable fingers. "Is there any reason why I couldn't?"

"Only that you are not a man," said Rudolph Trommel.

Roberta sniffed. "What has that to do with it?" she said hotly.

"Chust this. So far as I haf obserfed, among plants, there iss, of course, a slight structural differentiation in the sexes. I haf yet to obserfe a marked difference in energy or in

strength or in usefulness; und, in any difference in energy the balance would be in fafour of the female. In human kind there iss this difficulty. Suppose a horticulturist iss making experiments. Und then suppose there iss a baby with the colic. If the experimenter iss a woman und if it iss her baby—alas for the experiment! If the experimenter iss a man und if it iss his baby, he iss sorry it has the colic: that iss his wife's affair. He goes on with the experiment. If the woman iss not married und has no baby to haf the colic—then it iss relatif, aunt, friend, brother that calls for her when in need of aid: it iss, as it were, the call of the colic—spiritual, mental, or physical, und she responds und she drops her work. The man does not. Efen if it iss death the man iss sorry, he sends his sympathy (by his wife), he does not drop his experiment. No one expects him to.

"It iss not a difference of intelligence, of energy, of ability, but of concentration, of selection. It may be confention, it may be instinct—the woman feels the social, human claim binding in a way the man does not. That iss the difficulty. It may be ofercome by

concentration and by uncultifating the natural und expected-by-society female altruism."

"Um-m," said Roberta contemplatively. Then she changed the subject. "How did you learn about plants, Uncle Rudolph?"

"Very eassy. I went where plants were and when I had those, then I went where there were plants I did not know. When I was a lad at Zurich, I learnt there what there wass to know about plants at Zurich; when I had what could be learnt there, I put my bundle on my shoulder, und I went to France, und I worked one year, two years, und I learned roses. Und then I went to the rhododendron growers und I worked there. I learned what they had to teach. Und then I went to England—I worked there in the nurseries one year, two years. I went to one nursery; I found they knew nothing; I left. I went to another. I learnt what wass to be learnt there. Und then I went to Boskoop, for then I knew it wass for me azaleas and rhododendrons, und I worked there. Und at night always I read, und when I found the man lied I burnt him."

"What!"

"I burnt his book in my fire. If he did not gif the information that wass nothing; one does not gif what one has not. But if he stated as a fact something he had not proved, he wass not to be trusted. There wass one man, he has been my authority for ten years. But he said something. My experiment made me think it wass not so. I tried again und yet again. The same result. He had lied, he had said a thing wass true that he did not know to be true. I burnt him. He should gif no false information to any one else after I wass dead." The old man ended calmly.

The girl's eyes laughed, but her mouth was grave.

"Have you any books left, Uncle Rudolph?"

"A few. With plants one gets the knowledge here"—he tapped his cap with his stick—"und here"—he held out a broad, short-fingered, capable hand.

"That's where I want it. Would they give me a job at the gardens, Uncle Rudolph, like you had at Boskoop?"

"There is no woman there but one, and she is in the office and writes and that sort of thing."

"Accounts?" asked Roberta anxiously.

"No, no, she has not intelligence. Henry Sterling does the accounts. I think she leaves soon also. She iss to be married presently. That takes no intelligence."

"If I were there—if Mr. Worthington let me —would you show me about plants when there was time?" asked the girl eagerly.

"I would gif what I could to any one who had sincere interest," said the old man, "but I haf no time for the trifler. Good-day. It is late already."

"Um-m!" said Roberta thoughtfully as she watched old Rudolph go down the street, a thick, broad figure stumping heavily with his cane, and then turned again to the phlox she was dividing.

"I wonder what she does?—that Ellen Griscom. Dictation I suppose—that sort of thing. She is there probably at 8:30. If one got there at seven," she laughed to herself, "there'd be apples of wisdom to pick up like the apples there were for the wise early little pig in the nursery story. I'll try," she said to herself.

Roberta went on with her planting, but ab-

sent-mindedly, tucking in the soil about the seedling larkspur very much as an old lady does her knitting with quick skilful fingers but the mind far off.

Presently she rose, brushed the dirt from her fingers, looked at them ruefully a moment, then dipped them in her watering pot and rubbed them with her handkerchief.

It was still early. Aunt Adelaide would not be at breakfast for half an hour yet. Roberta looked about her garden a moment, picked the bluest of the stately larkspurs, and then went down the path between the hollyhocks, through the little white-painted gate, into the Major's domain. He was already at breakfast, as Roberta knew he would be—the little table set on the shady porch.

"Don't talk to me, Adelaide," he would say to Miss Davenant, who was much troubled about his customs. "Don't bother me about my attitude toward life. It may be wrong—I don't say it's becoming, but it's comfortable. If I had a wife she would study my comfort, wouldn't she? Well, I haven't. So I study it myself, and very successfully. And if you

are comfortable yourself, you are not cross with your neighbours. Benevolence, like charity, should begin at home."

"Hello! Early Bird," he said, "are you after worms? Lots of them down in my cabbages. Nice fat round ones. Sit down, Roberta, have some coffee?"

"Can't, Uncle Jim," she said, as she sat down on the edge of the porch. "But I brought you larkspur as a first course."

"Nice child," said the Major, taking the larkspur approvingly. He looked at her a moment. "Well, what is it?"

"Uncle Jim," she said, "did you ever feel as if you'd 'bust' if you didn't do something different?"

"Lord, yes, child"—he put his glasses on his nose again—"but I never did. That's youth —champagne struggling against the cork. You've three corks. What is it you want to do? Ride Nancy at the County Fair? I might let you."

Roberta leaned back against the pillar, clasping her hands loosely about her knees.

"Uncle Jim," she said, "I know exactly what I want to do."

"Then it's easy," said he cheerfully, resuming his eyeglasses. "Do it."

"But it isn't so easy to do it. I want an establishment. I want not a little garden but a big garden, and greenhouses—lots of greenhouses. I want to go into business, and that's the business. I want to grow carnations and orchids and chrysanthemums and evergreens and all sorts of rare things, and I want to learn it, just as a man does when he begins as office boy."

"Um-m," said James Pomerane, taking off his eyeglasses again and looking at her critically. Then he turned to the setter. "What do you think of it, Zip Coon?"

The setter unclosed one eye, looked at his master, wagged his tail, then stuck his nose again between his paws.

"Zip Coon approves," said Major Pomerane. "I have some respect for his opinion. Doubt if Adelaide cottons to the apprentice idea, Lord Robert. If you were a boy——"

"That's just what Uncle Rudolph said, and

—well . . . I admit it would be an advantage, but I'm not. The best I can do is to try for Ellen Griscom's job at Roseberry Gardens. What do you think, Uncle Jim?"

"Um-m!" repeated the Major. "I think they're old fossils out there, all of them—petrified sylva and flora if you like, but petrified for all that—regular carboniferous strata it is. Shouldn't think it would be gay company."

"The azaleas are gay enough!"

"But unresponsive," said the Major. "And why you should fancy tying yourself to an infernal clicking machine like that I don't see, when there's dogs and horses and blue sky."

"But will you, Uncle Jim? And will you say a word for me to Mr. Worthington? I know I could do it."

"Lord, yes," he said. "I'll see Horace, and I'll try and calm Adelaide for you, too, but—— Well, I think—I think I'd break it gently to Aunt Adelaide if I were you, and I think for the present I'd keep that ambition locked up in safe deposits like me and that old Trommel."

"You're an angel, Uncle Jim. I'll come over

and make Nancy look as if she was made of satin."

"But, my dear," protested Miss Adelaide, "none of the Davenant ladies have earned their living!"

"More shame to them!" said Roberta cheerfully. "If I were a boy I'd have been at work two years ago instead of living off you. I can't help not being a boy, Aunt Adelaide, but I can help loafing. Besides, haven't you wanted me to settle down? And if getting rooted in a garden isn't settling down, what is it? And then it will make me very happy, and I'll bring you home such pretty things!"

So it happened that September found Roberta Davenant at work at the famous old Roseberry Gardens.

CHAPTER THREE

ROBERTA fitted at Roseberry Gardens as she had never fitted into the Davenant house. She liked it. She liked the head of the firm, Mr. Horace Worthington, a little old gentleman with charm and rare courtesy of manner, a scholar and botanist. He was slight and silvery haired, and wore large gold-bowed spectacles. In fact, it seemed as if every one at Roseberry Gardens had silvery hair or gray. The only young life really evident was Roberta herself and the freckled office boy, Barney. There was, it is true, a sprinkling of sons and nephews among them, and there was Conklin, the packer, thin, nervous, rapid, and black haired, but the impression of the workmen's heads one saw bending here and there among the nursery rows was of gray and silver, like the big Alcock's spruce at the drive end.

The young secretary liked it all—the excitement of packing and shipping, the scent of

fresh earth from the heaps of little plants awaiting their journey, the fragrance of young evergreens that made the long packing shed "smell like Christmas," as she said.

She enjoyed the romance of it: the Christmas trees that were started south in late September to bring a northern Yuletide to the little South Americans; trees that went west like valiant pioneers to the treeless regions to combat drought and winds and make a foothold for others; stout young junipers that were sent to the seacoast to protect wind-swept struggling gardens from northeasters.

She loved the heaps and heaps of rosebushes, only brown stems and roots in the autumn, that would wake up in the spring in a new home to make some bit of wilderness blossom. She used to wonder how they would like their new homes. There was no cause for worry about the delicate stately camellias that went away most carefully packed and attended. Those were sure, like fine ladies, to get good treatment simply because they demanded it!

And she liked the people who came and went: those that bought few plants but chose them

judiciously, each taking home as a prize to his garden some lovely new thing; little old ladies whose one outing in the year was a visit to the famous gardens and the purchase of a long-desired daphne or andromeda, to take away with pure delight. Most of the owners of large places, who visited the gardens, were real plant lovers and enjoyed to the utmost any beauty of a new sort. If they were not plant lovers they did not come, but sent their gardeners, Scotchmen, Germans, or Englishmen who knew and loved plants. Roberta hated dealers—the hard commercial type to whom a plant was merely something out of which to make money in the handling. One of these prosperous-looking, florid gentlemen would look casually at a row of exquisite young mountain laurel as poetic a flower as the Lord ever made, and say patronizingly:

"Pretty good material. I'm using a lot of it." At such times Roberta would go back to the office in disgust.

"Hope you didn't show him any of the lovely things, Michael," she said, when O'Connor came into the office after taking about the Gardens

one of the non-elect. "I wouldn't mind his having privet. I think the Lord must have made catalpas and privet for just such people—those and Thunberg's barberry. None of those has any feeling!"

Michael laughed.

"You're as bad as Mr. Trommel, Miss Davenant! Whatever would Roseberry Gardens do if it wasn't for Michael to forget about feelin's and sell plants. You've not the right understanding."

"'Tis an ar-rt to sell plants, and a foine art. There's no pleasure in life like it! To take a man, who has no idea in his head but to buy a bit of something green to stick somewhere, and that as cheap as he can, and to wake him up to see how foine is this and this and this! To make him feel there'll be no peace in his soul until he has Magnolia stellata or a group of foine azaleas! 'Tis an achievement! And once he larns to buy, he'll buy plants to the day of his death, and thin he'll leave ordthers f'r plants in the cemint'ry lot and f'r its maintainance.

"Still, I had trouble to-day. Mrs. Hewson was here—the old lady—wit' her daughter.

Now, the old lady will buy foine if she's let alone. But Miss Hewson—it's homely she is, and not young neither! And 'tis nothing she thinks of but 'I'm Miss Hewson, I am! And I own the whole state of Delaware, I do.' And it was: 'Now, mother, you don't want that! Now, mother, that's quite like a snowball we have. Now, mother, it's time we were going!' At last I c'd'n't stand it no longer.

"'Miss Hewson,' I says, 'belike ye're not aware that 'tis not of hersilf yer mother is thinkin', but of childern and grandchildern and of makin' the place beautiful for thim. 'Tis yersilf and yer childern afther you that'll see the full beauty of that rhodydendron.'

"At that she quieted down a bit an' let the old lady buy two or three plants. But 'twas not long before she began again wit' her 'Now, mother!' She spint but fifty dollars, did the old lady. She'd have spint two hundred and fifty if the daughter 'd let her alone.

"'Oh, Miss Hewson,' I says to myself, 'indeed you'd do better if you'd as much sinse as yer mother. And you'd give a lot of that same state of Delaware if you was as young

and good lookin' as the gur-rl we have in the office!'

"'Tis a pity," said Michael, shaking his head, "for a gur-rl to grow up like that. But her father's a State Sinator, and what can you expect?"

. . . . . .

Promptly at 9:15 every morning Mr. Horace Worthington's coach, driven by a frosty-haired negro, Peregrine Pink, drove up to the office door.

"Whoa, dar!" the young secretary would hear through the open window in tremendous tones. "Whoa, dar!" and Peregrine would rein in the placid, leisurely gray horse as fiercely as if he were a battle-impassioned stallion and Peregrine himself a cavalry officer.

Then the office door would open, Mr. Worthington would come in, glance at the clock, and compare it with his watch.

"Dear me! I must speak to Peregrine; he is invariably late."

But by that time Peregrine would have driven off, breathing a bit hard from the late excitement. Peregrine's instructions were that he

should be at the Worthington residence at a quarter of nine. But whether the old darkey was dilatory or whether he held a firm opinion that nine o'clock was too early for Mr. Horace Worthington to be at his office, it would be hard to say. Never, during the past five years, had he appeared at the Worthington house before exactly nine; and always Mr. Worthington intended to "reprimand Peregrine."

Mr. Worthington was not at all successful at reprimands; either he postponed giving them or they missed the mark and went harmlessly over the head of the offender.

"Patrick," Roberta heard him say to an aged workman who had done exactly the opposite of the instruction given, "it seems to me that if there is an erroneous method of work, you invariably choose it."

"Yis, sorr," responded Patrick with contented pride, "Oi do that!"

Mr. Worthington was a bachelor of seventy, with the serenity and benignity that seems to come to many men who have lived their lives among plants, for gardens have a way of blessing back those who really love them.

He was a scholarly old gentleman. He liked to quote Horace and Ovid, and would repeat line after line of Homer because he liked the music and sonorousness of the old poet. He read Sir Thomas Browne, and never could plan an orchard without associating it, in his mind, with the adored quincunx of Sir Thomas, a plan that, to the exquisite old prose-poet, was the quintessence of garden symbolism. As a young man he had travelled extensively, not only on the continent, but in Russia, in Japan, which then was an almost unknown country. He knew Kew Gardens almost as well as he knew Roseberry Gardens; and in landscape art he swore by Repton and Le Nôtre.

Yet with all his love and feeling for antiquity, for the beauty and charm of the older gardens, in horticulture and horticultural experiment he was not so much intensely modern as he was a futurist. For to be modern is to be mentally in the fashion, and merely to echo the thought and feeling about one—an easy and unimportant thing to do. Horace Worthington was a futurist.

In his mind, the experiment of the Arabian

gardeners centuries and centuries ago with the traditional "blue roses," the supposed origin of the yellow roses, linked itself with the present way of encouraging the blue tint in the Hortensis hydrangeas by iron filings in the soil. He considered the Arabian gardener a fellow experimenter, animated all those years back with the same passionate interest in a plant's possibilities. He, too, had lived in the future. Because a thing had never been done, was not horticultural usage, was to him no reason why it should not be done. Because a plant "could not be grown in this country" was no reason why it might not thrive at Roseberry Gardens.

So while other horticulturists were content to import new or unusual plants, Horace Worthington was never content until he could grow them and grow them easily in the Roseberry Gardens with no more than the customary amount of care. Therefore, instead of importing plants, he imported Rudolph Trommel, whose interest in experiment was as great as his own.

Horace Worthington had the theory that plants could learn to adapt themselves to a

very different climate; if by coddling and watchfulness a plant could be brought through several winters safely, the second or third generation from that plant might endure the climate without aid.

He held that plants could learn to change their diet, and constantly tried to induce the critical ones to be content with ordinarily good garden soil.

He had other visions besides those concerned with methods of growing. He wished to see a winter garden in the heart of the city. It should occupy an entire block. The centre would be a great glassed-in space, there would be no extra heat but what the sun through the glass afforded. Here would be, not hothouse plants, but, grown as in the open, those not quite able to stand a northern winter—camellias, Indian azaleas, tender rhododendrons, the Southern jessamine, and ilex; on the outer edges of the square would be art shops, florist's shops, curio shops, and kindred pretty business attracted by the charm of the situation. Here might the aged and convalescent sit to sun themselves in the winter sunshine and watch the busy life go by. In summer the glass

would be removed and the place would be a Public Garden abloom with roses.

As early as in the '40's Horace Worthington was writing of city playgrounds for children, of roof-gardens where plants might really be grown, of housetop conservatories—things which to-day, some seventy years later, are matters of "recent experiment."

But when he explained these projects in the papers in rather flowery letters signed "Agricola," he was accused of getting his ideas from Nineveh and Babylon, of being steeped in his beloved ancients and "out of touch with modern life." He was told that he was ignorant of the trend of present education when he urged gardens for children.

Worthington was rated old fashioned, a sentimentalist, a dreamer about gardens—the usual contemporary verdict on any constructive thinker.

Because he believed in our climatic similarity, Japan and Japanese horticulture interested him greatly. He had met Siebold, the German botanist; he knew well Doctor Hall; and it was to Roseberry Gardens that Doctor Hall brought the

exquisite Japanese flowering apple, known first as Malus Halleana, now as Pyrus Malus Parkmanni, a very rose-bud of an apple-tree, and Evonymus Yeddoensis and many another variety.

Mr. Worthington and Rudolph Trommel would hold long and animated conversations, chiefly about rhododendrons, and how they should be grown.

"It is the *climate* that makes the difference," Mr. Worthington would say; "the same in races as in plants. Give Labrador the climate of equatorial Africa and you will have tropical vegetation. It is our climate that strains the English rhodedendrons; the peat soil has little to do with it. Our extreme and sudden changes tax the root system, and that is why the native rhododendron has twice the spread of roots as an English one. It needs them."

"That may be so," assented Rudolph Trommel indifferently.

"If we can develop a good root system, we have it! Peat does not encourage a large root system and demands much moisture; we must try it without peat, and with no surface watering. If, with the resistance of the Catawbiense

we set the fine colour, it will be an achievement!"

"It iss possible," said old Rudolph, who rarely was worked up to the same pitch of enthusiasm as Horace Worthington.

"Possible!" the old gentleman would say in a glowing voice; "it can be done! We shall have the colour of the hybrids and the hardiness and ease of the culture of the common privet!"

"But we need a hedge plant, Trommel! Something that will be in America what the yew is in England."

For Michael and Michael's methods Horace Worthington had an affectionate tolerance. He had tolerance and something like real pity for Henry Stirling, painstaking and hard working, and absent just now on business. Poor Henry! He had no feeling for the beauty and poetry of the business. With him it was all sizes and prices and quotations. It could no more be helped than blindness. He liked Roberta. He appreciated her colour in the dingy office very much as he did the colour of azaleas. He liked her eager interest in the plants and he used to lend her books—Repton and Gilpin,

"Evelyn's Diary," and a fat, comparatively modern book, "L'Art de Jardin," by André (for its excellent account of Le Nôtre), also Robinson's "English Flower Garden," with the caution that he was a bit gone mad over the "naturalistic," so she must not believe him completely.

Roberta used to take these home to the old house, and Aunt Adelaide became quite wildly interested. She would read them while Roberta was at the office. She enjoyed particularly the elegance of the Le Nôtre gardens, and the emphasis William Robinson laid on gardening being so lovely and suitable a concern of woman. She was relieved that Roberta was interested in something so safe and womanly.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHEN the grumbling teamster had at last gone down the road, Michael O'Connor returned to the office and sat down beside the big desk where the young secretary was established.

"Thank Hiven! that's done!" he said fervently. "'Tis like a nightmare sittin' on the chist of the Roseberry Gardens till Tompkins is off in the mornin'."

Roberta laughed as she pulled a bunch of lists from a drawer.

"Tell me about these, Michael."

They were orders to be given to the different foremen. Michael drew out a case and put on large steel spectacles.

Roberta held up one for scrutiny. "Pete?" inquiringly.

He shook his head. "He's not sinse enough for that. Give that to O'Malley."

"Here!"

He took the lists in his hand. "This, and this, and this—that'll keep O'Malley busy." He sorted the orders carefully and slowly, according to the intelligence required and convenience in digging, and handed them back to Roberta.

The girl clipped the lists together in accordance with Michael's suggestions, initialled them, and pushed the order-book aside.

"We must send a man to-morrow to do planting at the Babies' Home," said Roberta. "Who's the one to go?"

Michael puckered his lips a moment, then his face lighted.

"Brian," he said; "sind Brian. 'Tis a foine lad he is and knows the plants well, but he can't keep from the dhrink. 'Tis a pity a man would wish to take leave of his sinses for the sake of puttin' things down his t'roat! Sind him! 'Tis only milk and infants' food he'll get, and not a dhrink wit'in ten miles! 'Tis just the place for him."

Michael picked up his felt hat, started to go, then suddenly turned.

"I was forgettin'!" he exclaimed. "I know ye had to go in airly yesterday about that ship-

ment, but 'twas a pity! Mister Herford—Mr. Maurice J. Herford—was here."

"Was he?" asked Roberta carelessly.

"He was that! An' so disapp'inted at not gettin' a sight of yez, he c'u'd buy nothin'—nothin' at all, at all!"

Roberta's eyes laughed. "Too bad!" she said.

"Yes, so I thought. It wint to my har'rt to see my little man so disapp'inted-like, so I tuck him out to the houses, an' I showed him the Magnolia parviflora you are forcin', an' gave him wan branch. I said I knew," he smiled broadly, "you was forcing them for him, knowin' his int'rust in magnolias."

"Michael!" exclaimed the girl, "how could you!"

"How c'u'd I not?" he demanded, "There was the foinest little man that comes out to Roseberry Gardens. How c'u'd I let him go home so forlornsome and lookin' like there was nothin' in loife at all, at all? Don't ye give a flower to a b'y or gur-rl in the street that looks hungry for it? An' if so little a thing w'u'd make a man happy, 'tis not yersilf, Miss Davenant, that w'u'd have the har-rt to refuse!"

Roberta laughed helplessly.

"Don't you do that again, Michael, or I'll——"

But Michael was already disappearing. Left alone in the dingy office, a look of vexation clouded the girl's face, then she laughed. One could not get really cross with Michael.

She looked at the clock.

"Eight," she said to herself. It would be an hour and a quarter before the coachman would bring Mr. Horace Worthington and the mail.

She took her hat from the nail and went out into the gay May morning.

On one side of the office was a wide ploughed field, in which the men were preparing to plant corn, to give the land its sabbatical year. Perched on the fence was a solemn row of blackbirds, waiting for the sowing to begin—all eyes on the furrows.

She turned the other way, past rows and rows of dogwood whose petals were beginning to open—red-flowering ones that looked as if a flock of scarlet butterflies had just alighted on their dark branches. Through the arched gateway in the hemlock hedge she passed, and along the broad grass path, until she caught sight of



"Along by the woods to the end of the dogwoods — and that's a pleasant walk"

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Mr. Trommel, basket on arm, bending over the gorgeous azaleas.

"Good morning, Uncle Rudolph!"

"Good morning!" he responded. "You can help me a bit, I think. What iss the colour?" He clipped off a blossom and held it up for Roberta's inspection.

She looked at it critically. "The petals are rose colour and the buds garnet—I think I should say just that. You can't make a mixture of the colours. They aren't mixed; they're distinct."

Rudolph nodded "good" and wrote with a cramped hand on the label, repeating as he wrote, "Garnet unfolting to pale rose," then twisted the wire around.

"Und this?"

It was hard to tell; the petals were salmon infused with pale gold.

"What is its name?" she asked.

"Three hundred und forty-four."

"Sounds like a prisoner," she said, "or a ward patient. It should have a better name than that!"

"You can name it," he said, "it iss mine.

It iss one of the new seedlings. It iss hard to find names for all the children, take it!"

She took the flower.

"It looks like the sun shining through in the morning more than anything else," she said. "Aurora, I'd call it, but perhaps I'll find a better name.

"I must go now, Uncle Rudolph; I've a list for Peter. I have to go to 'End Entirely.'"

She went quickly down a broad grass path, through another gateway, and into the drive again. It was not a wide one; on each side were tall, close-clipped hemlock hedges that stretched straight to the bordering line of woods, where the drive ended in a circle.

This was what Michael called "Entirely." "To be sure," he said, "'Tis the 'End Entirely.'"

To Roberta's mind there should have been a statue, a fountain, or a pool at the end of the driveway. The straight hedges, the blooming trees that reached above, and the dim woods that ended it seemed to demand such a terminus. Instead, at the end of the stately drive was an unnoticed opening which led to the unpreten-

tious establishment of Washington Jones, the well-tempered negro teamster.

Roberta walked quickly and happily, swinging the azalea between her fingers, looking up again and again at the late Magnolia-Lenné that held up great wine-coloured chalices to the morning sun, and the blossoming pear trees, for on the other side of the hedge pear and peach tree stood, row after row in brilliant flower, while here and there a crimson peach showed vivid among the dazzling whiteness as a scarlet tanager against a snowbank.

Unconsciously she began to hum an air and then to sing in a clear young voice, light and rather delicate, but true in pitch:

"Faites-lui mes avoeux, portes mes voeux
Revellez à son âme,
Le sécret de ma flamme
Que mon cœur nuit et jour——"

She stopped suddenly.

Just at the opening of Washington's private road, which the widening of the hedge had concealed, stood a tall young fellow, sketch-book in hand, soft felt hat pulled down over his eyes.

He had on brownish, loose-fitting clothes, but she noticed only the dark gray eyes and the shock of light hair.

He pulled off his cap quickly. "I hope I'm not trespassing," he said.

"No," she answered, "not unless you break branches or pull up plants."

"It was so like an English garden," he said, "and I had to have a bit of English garden. I wish I hadn't stopped the song!"

"Look!" cried Roberta, pointing to the blossoming tree that leaned over the hedge opposite. A brown thrush flew from the hedge top, lit on the very tip of a blossoming branch, and poised himself, swaying with the branch his own weight had set in motion. The two watched in silence till there came a strain of exquisite song, clear and high. A moment later and it was repeated. "I *hoped* he'd do that!" she breathed, then laughed softly from sheer happiness.

"He sang it 'twice over' for you, too! There's 'England in April' and if you want the 'elm tree bole in tiny leaf,' it's down yonder."

"It *was* perfect," said the young man softly.

They waited, but the thrush did not sing again. He flew to a more distant pear tree.

Roberta came to herself. Perhaps a thought of Aunt Adelaide flashed across her mind.

"I am quite sure you are not trespassing," she said rather formally, "but it might be well to stop as you go back and ask Mr. Worthington's permission. He would prefer it."

She nodded slightly, turned, and disappeared past the hedge among young dogwoods.

Paul Fielding looked after her till she had vanished.

Then he turned to the hedges and blossoming trees.

"Lordy! but that was pretty," he said. "I wonder who——" He tore up his sketch and began another rapidly, suggesting the hedge and the flowering trees and a girl's outline with a splash of copper colour where her head should be.

Meanwhile, Miss Davenant was walking swiftly along a narrow footpath that skirted the oak woods.

She looked back.

No one was in sight.

So she began running, lightly and easily, with the sureness of an Indian, until the path ended at a wagon track. Flushed and breathing quickly, she stopped running and put up her hand to her hair—the immemorial feminine gesture, for she was nearing Peter's "gang," and the secretary to the head of Roseberry Gardens must be dignified, as befitted that ancient place.

Presently she saw the men. One of them, evidently the head workman, left his group and approached.

"Good morning, Peter," she said. "It's just a few things for an order of Brian's that are here."

She handed him a slip. "Bring these over and mark them for him, that's all."

"It was too pretty an errand for Barney," she said to herself as she turned away, and walked down the wagon track which was a short cut to the office. It was a lovely bit of road. There were violets in the grass alongside, and wild growth of young oak, maple, and witch-hazel arched the narrow road overhead. Presently she stopped to listen. There was the thrush again.

"I oughtn't to have spoken that way without an introduction," she said to herself ruefully. "I wish I didn't do things first and think afterward! But it was the thrush's fault!"

"I met a most estimable young man," Mr. Worthington reported when he came in about noon from his walk around the plantation, where Roberta's acquaintance had evidently found him. "Young Fielding is a son of Colonel Carlton Fielding of South Carolina, one of the Fieldings of Paradise Park on the Cooper. It was his great-grandfather, Carlton Fielding, very well known at Kew, who brought over the first Camellia japonica. The largest specimens of it in the country are at Paradise Park, and this young man says the original plant is still living, a hundred and fifty years old! Very interesting."

"Very," said Roberta.

"Also, he tells me his father has naturalized the Indian azaleas at Paradise Park. The young man is interested in landscape gardening and wishes to learn our Northern plants; his father advised him to visit here. So, if you

will tell Michael and the other foremen to give him all information possible, we shall be doing our duty by him. So few of the young men nowadays have any interest in plants!" sighed Mr. Horace Worthington regretfully.

Miss Davenant heard more of the young man later, when Michael O'Connor came in at noon.

"Who's the lad the boss says we must lind a hilpin' hand on the path av' larnin'—him that was here this mornin', leggy as badly grown Rose of Sharon, wid the hair like a corn-shock?"

"Mr. Fielding," she answered. "Mr. Paul Fielding of Paradise Park, South Carolina, whose great-great-grandfather imported the first Camellia japonica."

"He did, did he?" questioned Michael. "And what's to become of my little man? The foinest man at buying camellias that America has projuced?"

Roberta laughed. "I don't see how anything can happen to Mr. Herford, Michael, so long as you take such care of him."

"'Tis well I do," said Michael, "but what's the long lad doin' here?"



"He's been studying landscape gardening and wants to learn plants."

"Larn plants," repeated Michael. "If he spiles things for my little man, I'll larn him," he said grimly.

CHAPTER FIVE

IF PEREGRINE PINK had a poor sense of time, Mr. Maurice Herford's was marvellously acute.

Exactly at four-thirty Mr. Horace Worthington was driven home. Miss Davenant, however, remained until nearly six. She liked having the place to herself and getting the work arranged clearly for next day.

Rarely did a customer appear in the late afternoon, for folk who came to Roseberry Gardens expected to spend an hour or so among the plants and usually arrived early—all except Mr. Maurice J. Herford! Exactly five minutes after Mr. Worthington's carriage rolled down the road toward the village, Mr. Herford would appear, coming along the side road from the direction of the Philadelphia Turnpike.

Mr. Herford was an old friend of Michael's.

"'Tis twinty years," said Michael, "since Mr. Maurice Herford's been comin' to Roseberry

Gardens, twice the season, and he's bought well from the first. Says he: 'There's no place I'd rather be, and if I had the sinse to do the wor-rk,' says he, 'I'd ask f'r a job to-morrow.'"

Maurice Herford was wealthy—very wealthy—a bachelor of forty odd and a man of leisure. He travelled every summer and belonged to but one club in the city—a rather fashionable and exclusive club, but its rooms were quiet and overlooked a garden. Maurice Herford's intense love was for plants. Besides the plants Herford really loved Michael O'Connor. His most vivid happiness was to come out to Roseberry Gardens, walk about the delightful old place, or sit by the greenhouse benches to talk with Michael of plants or of Irish politics.

Intensely "Home Rule" was Michael, and it was but little use he had for the English administration.

"Idle ould woman!" he would say of the late Queen Victoria. "'Tis an idle ould woman she is, wid a large family! And by and by a little duke is born somewhere off and thin—does he airn his livin'? Is he thrained to a trade, seeing that the job av King av England is far

from him? Not at all, at all! As soon as iver he is born the poor Irish is taxed for his maintainance! And thin, there is another little duke, for ivry wan of the old woman's childern has childern a-plenty, and again the poor Irish is taxed.

"Of what use is it? 'Tis better to support a President and a district leader, for the district leader is Irish, an' 'tis the Irish come in on some av the jobs inst'id of only an' exclusively on the taxes."

Michael was never done talking of the charms and virtues of his adored Maurice J. Herford.

"Foinest little man that ever was! 'Tis twinty years that he's been buying plants here. Twice a season he used to come. ('Tis twice a week since last September!) There's no one buys like him! 'Tis himself knows how to buy.

"There's some that buy—an' f'r thim 'tis like the pullin' av a tooth; there's some—an' 'tis like the wather faucet when it won't run well and yet don't quite stop—ye keep expectin' an' expectin', an' maybe a little dribble; and there's some an' they buy like a machine—

there's no pleasure in that; but with some 'tis like a bubblin' fountain, and that's Mr. Herford. 'Michael,' he says, givin' me his cheque, 'there's some plants marked, ye can put down the cost, the cheque will cover it, and if there's some left, sind . . . ye can sind somethin' pretty. Use yer taste,' he says.

"'Where shall I sind them to?' says I.

"'Oh, yis, says he, 'I forget,' says he. 'Let me see,' says he. 'My word!' says he, 'where *shall* I sind them?'

"Thin he thinks a bit, and thin pulls out a card. 'Sind them to Mr. Stackpole—Hinery F. Stackpole, av Chistnut Hill. He's been after buying a new place; he should l'arn to buy plants,' he says. 'To sind him some is the best way to teach him.'"

Because of the careful arrangement of the time table, it would happen that when Mr. Herford entered the office he would be surprised to chance on the secretary only. His first inquiry would be for Mr. Worthington.

Miss Davenant was "very sorry; he had only just gone."

"Ah, yes!" Mr. Herford would glance at the clock. "It takes a good bit of time to get here. Michael? Is Michael near at hand?"

Roberta thought a minute. "I believe he's at the end of the dogwood plantation; he said he was going there. I'll send Barney and have him here as soon as possible."

"About how long would it take?"

Roberta was truthful. "Perhaps twenty minutes."

"I'm so sorry," he would say, "I haven't the time. It's a pity, too, to break in on his work."

"Would one of the other men do?" Roberta would ask—"Pete is quite near, or O'Malley?"

He would shake his head. "I'd rather have Michael. I can easily come again."

Then, doubtfully—

"Would it be too much trouble? I wonder if you could——"

"It is no trouble," Miss Davenant would answer in her most businesslike manner, "but I don't know the prices of specimen plants."

Mr. Maurice Herford's face would lighten. "That makes no difficulty—you know the location. If you would only mark for me the

ones I want, Michael can affix the proper prices later. If it would not be too much trouble," he would repeat apologetically.

So Mr. Herford would have his desire and Roberta, her pockets stuffed with labels, would go with him out into the late afternoon sunshine, along the broad grass path and by the brilliant azaleas, stopping here and there to mark a plant.

He was rather silent, was Mr. Herford. Shy, middle-aged, and growing early gray. Roberta's whole impression was of silvery-gray. He used to wear grayish clothes. He had a clear, delicate profile and very, very unexpectedly dark-brown eyes that could flash with sudden pleasure.

Mr. Herford chose his plants for curious reasons. He selected some beautiful Indian azaleas that were over by the hedge. He stood on the grass path some yards distant, since from this point he could tell which of the plants he wanted. Also, he liked to see Roberta bending over the dazzling whiteness of the azaleas, her head against the dark background of the hedge, her coppery hair in the late afternoon

sun shining like an aureole of red-gold. It took Mr. Herford quite some time to find the right azaleas!

After about twenty minutes of selecting plants, he would return contentedly to the office, where Michael would probably be waiting, a smile of bland contentment on his face.

"Will you let me drive you in?" Maurice Herford asked Roberta once, a shy hopefulness in his voice.

"I'm sorry," she said, "it's very kind of you, but I have work to do that will take until six to finish. It's impossible."

Mr. Herford entered his carriage, carefully attended by Michael, and drove off a bit regretful, but on the whole well content.

Michael returned to the office, sat down, adjusting his red neckerchief with complacent pride.

"Michael," said the girl, "did you know Mr. Herford was coming out this afternoon?"

"He said somethin' of it the other day," replied Michael airily, "but 'twas nothin' to be counted on."

"And you knew he was coming when you

went to the far end of the dogwood lot! And I rang and rang for Barney!"

"I had the lad with me wor-rkin'. 'Tis a shame he knows so little about plants!"

"Michael!" she said reproachfully.

"Well!" he demanded, "do ye think I'll let a tow-headed lad have the run of the place all morning and give no chance to my little man, who's no brass because 'tis pure gold he is? Indeed not!

"When ye first came out to Roseberry Gardens, Miss Davenant, Mr. Worthington says to me, says he, 'Take good care of her, Michael,' he says, 'she's but wan gur-rl in a lot of men!' And ye may like it or not, but Oi'm doin' it," concluded Michael firmly, "to the extint of what sinse the Holy Mother has given me!"

CHAPTER SIX

EARLY as Roberta was, Rudolph Trommel was earlier. She would be out at the Gardens at seven, but the old Swiss would already have been up for three hours. Invariably he gave a couple of hours to his beloved philosophers—Immanuel Kant, Schopenhaur, Fichte, and Comte, or to Darwin and Herbert Spencer among the English. During intervals of discourse on plants he would expound their theories to the young secretary.

"In order properly to understand plants," he would explain, "one must haf a knowledge of philosophy. Otherwise, one believes exactly what one is told, und credulity iss a winding-sheet for knowledge."

Believing Kant too much for Roberta's mind, he advised her to begin on Spencer and lent her the "Synthetic Philosophy." In this, to her shame be it said, she did not make great prog-

ress, but stopped, fatigued, at the end of the "Unknowable."

Trommel considered habit a menace to enlightenment. "I, myself, haf done much from habit," he said. "I wass a member of the church, I wass confirmid, und so fort. *Und* when I came to America, I choined myself to the church here. It wass a matter of course.

"*But* one Sunday the minister preached und he said Darwin wass pernicious, the worlt wass made in sefen days, und such foolishness. Darwin iss not pernicious; he iss a fine intelligence. I know it.

"Next day I visit that minister of the church und I ask, 'Why, on Sunday, did you say such and such things?'

"'I belief them,' he says; 'it iss the doctrine of the church.'

"'Iss it the doctrine off your church?'

"'It iss,' he said.

"'Und when I choined myself to your church I subscribed to that doctrine?'

"'You did,' he says.

"'I subscribe to it no more!' I tell him. 'I will not hear men of fine intelligence called

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pernicious when I cannot stand up and say it iss a lie. I subscribe no more!'"

Roberta laughed. "You might have been burnt as a heretic years ago, Uncle Rudolph."

"Perhaps," he agreed, "but one cannot lie."

While Michael was assiduously selling to customers, new or old, Trommel was intensely occupied with new varieties, in bloom for the first time, making careful notes of variances; seeing if the sorts were true to name; noting those which should be propagated; marking plants which were especially good, from which grafts should be taken later, and from these Michael O'Connor was warned off by large signs, "DO NOT SELL."

"He always puts that mark on the foinest plants," grumbled Michael. "'Tis har-rd whin, afther much trouble, you get a man worked up to the buying point, wid a foine plant in his eye, and thin to come around on the other side and read the legend *do not sell!* 'Tis enough to make a man stop selling plants altogether. And thin what w'u'd Roseb'ry Gardens do?"

Trommel (Roberta felt) thought one ex-

tremely stupid who could not recognize a plant except in its blooming season.

"What rhododendron iss that?" he would question his pupil.

"If it were only in bloom——"

"Look at the leafes! Can you not see the indifiduality? That iss Mrs. Milner. Her leaf is much flatter than the others. Und that? It iss easy to tell from the habit. That iss Charles Dickins; he iss straggling, but a beautiful colour!"

Roberta herself was industriously keeping a journal, not of events, but of the appearance in bloom of one flower after another, and as each one appeared she put it down.

Rudolph Trommel showed her how to cut branches—exactly where the pruning should be done later, "Und then the plant suffers no harm." She would always have a budding knife or a pair of pruning shears in her pocket, and usually brought back with her to the office dogwood branches, or a spray of azaleas.

Once this early morning breathing-space was past, life at Roseberry Gardens was intensely busy—never was there a moment to spare.

It was only in the early morning that Roberta had time to listen to Trommel and his theories. For the rest of the day never were barn swallows busier than were she and Michael O'Connor. The spring was coming with a rush, and all deciduous trees must be shipped before they leafed out; afterward it was hazardous. Evergreens could wait a bit, also azaleas and magnolias; but the flowering trees and shrubs must go immediately.

"That iss the way of gardens," old Rudolph would say placidly (for having nothing to do with the shipping, the rush of the spring business left him unmoved). "Children are so also, although people try to make them ofer into lockstep. It is nature und it iss growth. It may be it iss also business. Frantic haste und then quiescence und peace. That iss plants und that is nurseries."

It mattered little if plants were in bloom, for the naked flowering shrubs had had their blossoms ready all winter to push out at the first warming of the branches; but the foliage meant root activity.

So, into the long packing shed came the heaps

and heaps of flowering shrubs, buds faintly showing, just ready to blossom; and tirelessly, with unfailing cheerfulness, did Michael O'Connor everywhere superintend the work, pushing along the elderly workmen who, without realizing it, fairly trotted about their tasks, for an old gardener is deft and skilful in handling plants, and can work with real rapidity, while brawn and ignorance may break the roots.

The packing sheds were more fragrant and flowery than ever. Roberta liked the necessary running in and out with tags and shipping directions, seeing to the careful wrapping of the roots, and tying up the lovely living things into long, mummy-like bundles that seemed to thrust legs and heads helplessly from the big truckloads every morning. There must be holes cut in the sides of the cases so that the evergreens might breathe. Each rhododendron had its ball of roots wrapped in burlap and tied with twine, packed to fit in the box held by cleats so that the tops were free. Conklin could glance at a heap of plants and make a box to fit it exactly. Roberta liked the feeling of the sphagnum moss that was used for packing.

She would not for anything have missed the early shipping, the "seeing plants off" on their great adventure and wishing them luck. "To think that Ellen Griscom (her predecessor at the office) crocheted in her spare minutes!" She exclaimed to her Aunt Adelaide: "It's like not bothering to look at your stocking Christmas morning!"

Occasionally to a nearby estate a load went unpacked, the trees standing upright, closely fitted into the wagon floor, while on an embowered seat sat the grim, sour Tompkins, or the grinning Washington, looking as if he were bringing Burnam Woods to Dunsinane.

"How can Tompkins grumble so with those flowering peaches almost all over him?" asked Roberta of Michael.

"If he was to drive into Hivin wid palm branches wavin' round and angels showin' him the way, he'd be disgruntled!" was the reply.

"Cheer up, man!" called Michael, who teased the luckless teamster sometimes. "'Tis the Babes in the Woods that you an' Washington arre, and I'm the crule Uncle that's drivin' you off. But mind ye don't lose the way!"

Toward the end of May things went in more leisurely fashion. The shipping was rapid, but there was less haste and little anxiety. The azaleas and rhododendrons, the young evergreens forwarded now were not so perishable; a trifling delay was not so serious a matter. Now, rather than earlier in the season, came those flower-loving folk who preferred to select their plants when in bloom—peonies, rhododendrons, or roses—and to have them marked for later shipment. Forethought is ever a gardener's virtue.

There came also landscape gardeners, too busy to visit earlier, to see and note the varieties they liked. Some of these were old friends of Michael's, for he had a wide and varied circle of acquaintances. Some would be newcomers, and some, like Paul Fielding, would be students.

A university professor, an old friend of Michael's, brought with him for his first visit, one afternoon, an English landscape gardener. Michael, who was in the office, saw the pair as they approached, walking from the station.

"Faith," he said to Roberta, "'tis my friend

the professor, wit' his university job again! 'Michael,' says he to me, says he, 'if ever ye get a chanst to sit down, Michael, there's a chair av Botany an' Horticulture awaitin' for you at the university!' I'll be after wantin' it soon," said Michael as he was leaving the office to greet them. "My bones are gettin' old."

When he had finished with his customers he came back to the office, sat down in a big arm-chair, leaned back and wiped the perspiration from his brow. "Hm," he said, "did ye see the Englishman Professor Prentiss had wid him—him with the checked suit and the fatness?"

Roberta nodded.

"'Tis Mr. Jameson Forsythe, he is, av London, and he's come here to show us how to lay out gardens, he has, but 'tis little he knows about buyin' plants, though I've larned him somethin' to-day!"

Michael settled his red neckerchief and smiled with satisfaction.

"What did you do to him, Michael?" asked the young secretary, a spark of amusement in her eyes.

"I sold him some plants," said Michael grimly, "an' if he comes out again, he'll buy as he should!"

He chuckled.

"At fir-rst 'twas, 'How much is that?' p'intin' to a foine rhodydendron.

"'Two dollars and a half,' says I.

"'Too much,' says he.

'And that?' p'intin' to as handsome an Abraham Lincoln as ye might wish to see.

"'Five dollars,' says I.

"'I c'u'd buy it for ten shillin' in the ould country. And that?'

"'Siven and a half,' says I.

"'I c'u'd buy two better f'r a pound in the ould country,' says he.

"I was tired out wid him, so I says to Professor Prentiss, 'Y'r fri'nd reminds me of the Irishman that wint up fr'm Dublin to London.'

"'How's that?' says he.

"And Mr. Jameson Forsythe he pricks up his ears, too, and 'How's that?' says he.

"'There was an Irishman that wint up fr'm Dublin to London, and he wint into a shop to

buy eggs. 'How much is they?' says he to the shopkeeper.

"'A penny apiece,' says the man.

"'Faith,' says the Irishman, 'I c'u'd buy two f'r ha'penny in the ould country!'

"'Well,' says the shopkeeper, 'an' why didn't ye stay there thin?'

"'Faith,' he says, 'I c'u'dn't find the ha'-penny!'

"Professor Prentiss, he laughed and laughed, and Mr. Forsythe he looked a bit mad, but he bought like a lamb after that and niver a word did he say about prices! Niver a wor-rd!

"Ye see," Michael explained to Miss Davenant, chuckling again, "'tis exactly the way wid those English gardeners. Av course they can buy the plants cheaper there, but 'tis here they come f'r the ha'pennies—the people with the money to spind.

"'Tis an ar-rt it is, to sell plants. There's some ye have to lead along gintly and tinderly; there's others, like Mr. Jameson Forsythe, that ye have to larn a lesson.

"Mr. Penfield was here to-day, wid his wife, and sorry I was to see thim come together.

Take Mister Penfield alone, he'll buy well. Take Mrs. Penfield alone, and she'll buy well! But he's a shy buyer when his wife is wid him!"

Michael could diagnose a customer with the skill of an accomplished physician diagnosing a case, and give him exactly the right treatment.

It was a different form of instruction from that which Roberta obtained from Rudolph Trommel or Mr. Worthington, but it was intensely interesting and afforded her much amusement.

"Oh, yis," she heard Michael say to a handsomely dressed woman who was looking approvingly at a very inexpensive plant, "that might do well enough for *some* people, but it's not the thing f'r *your* place!" And the good soul would think her elegance had so impressed Michael she would buy anything he suggested.

"And so you're the owner av the old Norris place on the Pike?" (This to a newcomer who had just told him where his estate was.) "Well, I *am* glad," said Michael cordially, "to larn that the foine old place has come at last into intelligent hands! I was always tellin' Captain Norris that the wan thing he needed, to make that the foinest place on the Turnpike,

was to have a plantation of evergreen up the hill, to put a foine hedge in front, to plant shrubs an' a few trees to cut off completely the sight av' the fact'ry. But he never had the sinse to do it. And to think that as soon as ye bought it ye should have came out to Rose-b'ry Gardens! Well, I am glad!"

Of course the gentleman bought well.

Aside from affording her this kind of instructive amusement Roberta found a stanch friend in Michael O'Connor. She made surprisingly few mistakes, owing to her intense interest in the business, but of course there were some

Once an irate dealer came out, a man who posed as a nurseryman though his grounds were but a seven by nine downtown office. The Roseberry Garden tag had been left on the plants; he had ordered it omitted. The plants must look as if they came from his nursery.

"Do see him, Michael!" begged Miss Davenant. "He's *very* angry!"

"Indeed I will," said Michael, who went out to meet the wrathful dealer with his most beaming smile.

"Why, Mister Kelly!" he said. "Indeed,

and it's foine to see you. And how well yo're looking. And how is Mrs. Kelly and the foine little b'y that was here wid you last year? 'Tis well I hope they are. And ar-re ye goin' to have the b'y in the business like y'rself?"

The angry worthy was smiling back before he realized it, and all he said by way of complaint was, and that apologetically, "There was a—er—little mistake in the last order."

"How did you do it, Michael?" asked Roberta when Mr. Kelly was gone.

Michael grinned complacently.

"Molasses," he said. "'Tis simple, but it wor-rks."

CHAPTER SEVEN

TWICE a week, all through the busy season, with unfailing regularity, exactly five minutes after Mr. Worthington's scheduled departure, did Mr. Maurice J. Herford appear at Roseberry Gardens.

If the circumstances were favourable he bought plants with joy and abandon, his only difficulty being where to send them.

Sometimes, though rarely, the circumstances were unfavourable. Once the copper-haired secretary was too busy with another client to do more than look up and nod. Then Mr. Herford reëntered his carriage and drove home. Once Mr. Worthington was delayed in leaving, and recognizing the occupant of the approaching carriage, bade Peregrine take back his own coupé and bring it again at five.

"I seem to have missed your visits so often," he said to Mr. Herford, who was "very sorry."

The two walked about the azalea plantation

discussing modern horticulture and the dearth of American writers thereon, owing, in Mr. Worthington's opinion, to the dearth of expert garden knowledge among American clergymen. "In England," said he, "the clergy—a most useful class—write both intelligently and pleasantly about gardens. Men like Dean Hole, for example." Mr. Herford agreed and deplored the lack, but he left no large-sized order to cheer the heart of Michael.

Usually, however, Michael had acted the part of stage manager for his favourite so skilfully that such casualties were avoided.

"*Mr. Herford* will be here this afternoon," he announced impressively to Roberta one morning in late May.

"Well," she said indifferently, "that should make you happy, Michael."

"It does that," he said, "except that to-day, f'r the life of me, I can't attend to him properly! 'Tis a shame, too, the foine man he is! Mr. Sanger, the archytect, will be out here till late, and Charley Frear, of Charles Frear & Sons, the big florists. 'Tis har'rd!

"I wonder," he exclaimed, his face lighting

up, "I wonder if you c'u'dn't do it? There's none of the min I'd trust wid the job. But the plants arre all marked. T'w'u'd be aisy for wan that knows thim so well as you to take him t'rough the azaleas, an' over by the hedge is some marked f'r him. Just show thim to him and put thim down if they're what he wants. And *thin* ye take him down to the End Entirely (and that's a plisant walk in the afternoon), and there's four golden retinosporas marked f'r him there. And *thin*, ye take him along by the woods to the end av the dogwoods (and *that's* a plisant walk), till ye come to some red-flowering dogwoods, wid his tag. And *thin*, ye bring him along to the farm road, and just before ye get there is some specimen rhodydendrons (and *that's* a plisant walk). I'm sure ye'll not mind it, Miss Davenant! Indeed, I'd take him if I c'u'd, but ye can see f'r yerself, 'tis a long way round and I'll be on me ould feet all day——"

"Michael!" said Roberta, "Mr. Herford is your client."

Just then Mr. Worthington came in.

"I was just explainin' to Miss Davenant,"

said Michael guilelessly, "where were the plants I'd marked f'r Mr. Herford. 'Tis scattered all over the place they are, and I'm afraid I'll not have time to take him wid Mr. Sanger to be here all the afternoon. 'Tis well some one should know their location. I don't like to disapp'int him!"

Mr. Worthington nodded approvingly. But Roberta scowled at Michael. None the less, that afternoon, with the exactness of an actor entering at his cue, Mr. Herford made his appearance, a bit earlier than usual. Mr. Worthington, Matthew Sanger, and Frear, the florist, were in the office when he entered. Michael turned with a troubled look to Mr. Worthington.

"C'u'd ye spare Miss Davenant this afternoon? She's the only wan but mesilf that knows where arre the plants I've marked f'r Mr. Herford. I've promised Mr. Sanger—Frear is going wid Brian now, but I'll go over his list wid him later. I'm sorry to trouble——"

"Surely, as far as I'm concerned," responded the old gentleman. "It is a pleasant afternoon; the other work can wait."

So Roberta picked up her hat and notebook

and went out into the late sunshine, casting a look of reproach at Michael, but he grinned back cheerfully. She smiled in spite of herself with amused vexation.

Roberta really liked Mr. Herford. She would have liked him better if Michael had been less assiduous, but Maurice Herford himself had little to do with Michael's deep-laid schemes. He only obeyed his mentor literally and exactly.

Roberta rather liked his shyness and the sudden pleasure that would light his face at the sight of a rarely lovely plant. She liked his detachment, liked that he never intruded or insisted and never brought in a personal element. She was ignorant, as the plants themselves, that he arranged to see her head in certain lights against the green background. He could talk entertainingly also, and used to tell her about famous English gardens, Hampton Court, Hadden Hall, the terraces at St. Catherine's, or the lovely little Ranelagh made by Charles for Nell Gwynn.

So the two went in and out among the plants, now brushing against the huge tree peonies of

Japan, now bending over gorgeous irises, very rainbows in colour.

To real flower lovers there is as little necessity for chatter in a garden as to a music lover the need of gossip at a concert. It is enough to drink in the beauty.

Maurice Herford was a dreamer as well as a recluse. Perhaps he could not have formulated to himself exactly what he wanted with the coppery-haired young girl at Roseberry Gardens, whose profile and head outline he loved to watch among the plants. She was young, unspoiled, eager. She had youthful interests and ambitions. He had no wish to cut things short for her; it would be like stunting a lovely plant, he thought. She wished to be a landscape gardener—very well. His question to himself was, at what point could he assist? One thing he knew—it was no more her time to love than it had been Evelyn Hope's. For her it was the growing season, rapid, eager, happy, and very sweet to watch.

Meantime, there was no harm in visioning, as he did, the broad grassy terraces before his own country house with Roberta pacing them—in

white she would be—he could see her light gown trailing over the grass. She would go down the steps into the garden; then he would see her against the background of tall dark hedges; she would be standing beside the hedge now. There was larkspur there, deep, dull-blue larkspur, and madonna lilies; he could see her bend over them as she was bending now over the iris, touching the petals gently.

"You're *very* lovely!" he said to the vision of Roberta in his own garden, but was startled, aghast, to find he had spoken aloud, for Miss Davenant turned quickly, startled also. Then she laughed.

But the spell was broken, the unconsciousness was gone, the pictures had disappeared, and in a most businesslike fashion the rest of the list was completed.

However, Mr. Maurice Herford drove home well pleased with life. In his great, silent, handsome house the pictures would come back to heart's content. Sometimes he even made her sit opposite him at dinner, at the solid mahogany table, and he knew how the candlelight would strike her burnished hair; and he

saw the wide gray eager eyes smile at him across the bowl of roses.

Later he sat in the big library, deep in a leather chair, and smoked silently in the dusk, while the garden pictures came again.

"'*Du bist wie eine Blume,*'" he said softly.

"It seems a pity even to try to pick it—so very sweet to watch——"

That is where the dreamers have the best of things, for no one can take away their visions. It's the tangible in life, the realized visions, that become broken and spoiled.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHEN the busy season of shipping was over, Roseberry Gardens felt like a household after a Christmas celebration—exhausted but happy. It rested a bit, then it drew its breath, put things in their accustomed order, and took up ordinary life again.

Instead of drawing in big trucks each morning, the horses were set to ploughing. It was fascinating to watch them, for here again the skill of the old gardeners showed itself. Timmy could drive a horse and plough between rows of rare plants and never injure the smallest branch, so well did he and the horse know their business.

There was transplanting of young evergreens to be done, late for an amateur, but accomplished rapidly and successfully. There were baby trees to be shifted from the greenhouse; benches to the frames, young grafted magnolias and Japanese maples, an army of them, to be moved from houses to frames for the first year

on their feet. In two more they would be in the open.

All of this work was superintended by Rudolph Trommel who, with a young plant, was as solicitous as a mother over a baby. One would see him sometimes bending over, looking down with adoring affection on the infant rhododendrons, up to their necks in soft, damp sphagnum moss, like babies snugly tucked in downy blankets. "Oh the *dear* lady, the *dear* lady!" he would say, smiling down on the helpless little *Mrs. Milners.*

"It iss," he used to explain to Roberta, "as it iss with chiltren. The common seedlings, they are the peasants: they haf large families und they take little or no care, und somehow the chiltren grow up. But these, these are the aristocrats. They must haf care und attendance und governesses und nurses. Und if you let them shift for themselfes, they may die."

Never did Royalist believe more passionately in the divine right of the aristocracy than did Trommel in the precedence which should be accorded to the aristocrats among plants.

There was for him no preferred nationality. He cared not if the plant were Russian or Japanese or English or Hollander; if it had the earmarks of the aristocrat among plants, that was enough.

Curiously and amusingly his political faith echoed his beliefs in horticulture.

"My country, right or wrong, iss foolishness," he would say. "That is the difficulty. So far as I haf obserfed, the political people start with the premise that the country's position iss right und has been right. Und that action must be adjusted to that conclusion. Und when the premise iss wrong, naturlich there iss difficulty. A man should say, 'My fine big country, sometimes I admire you. Now you are wrong, und this little country iss right. Haf the courage and honesty to say so!' Und, if efery man so considered, there would be no war. A man would say: 'I cannot fight for an erroneous opinion,' und he would not, not for a King or a President or a Ministry, for why should he lay down his life for an opinion which he does not hold? Und if he iss shot because he will not fight, he has the satisfaction of being

shot in defence of his opinion, not in defence of another man's opinion. No aniinal iss so foolish. They are like herds, those big nations, und not like indifiduals."

"Aren't you German, Uncle Rudolph?" asked Roberta.

The old man drew a deep breath.

"I speak Cherman, but I thank Gott"—he thumped his broad chest—"I am not Cherman! Und I speak French, but"—again he thumped his chest—"I thank Gott I am not French. Und I speak Italian, but I thank Gott I am not Italian. Und I speak Swedish, but I thank Gott I am not Swedish. Und I speak English, but I thank Gott I am not English. Und I speak Dutch, but I thank Gott I am no Hollander. What am I? I am a Switzer!" And he pounded his chest more vehemently than ever and breathed deep with patriotism for his gallant little country.

"Wass not Zwingli before Luther, und wass he not more broad minded, while Luther, like most reformers, wass narrow? If one agreed not with him he should go to Hell! A Switzer thinks for himself!" he said with pride.

The summer passed quietly and happily.

All the long July days Paul Fielding came and went at Roseberry Gardens, notebook in hand. Scant help did he get from Michael.

"'Tis never a gardener he'll make, that lad. He looks straight at a rhodydendron, a foine album grandiflorum: 'Tis a foine snowball,' says he.

"'It is indeed,' says I, 'the foinest snowball ye'd see in a week's journey. Ye'd best put it down in your book.' And Reilly says that whin he saw Washy's potato patch down by the End Entirely he says:

"'What is it?' says he.

"'It's privet,' says Reilly.

"'Indeed,' says he, an' he puts it down in his book. I hear that it's writing a play he is! 'Tis well; indeed, play'll suit him better than work.'"

But Paul Fielding had another attraction besides his more or less intermittent garden enthusiasm. He owned a good saddle horse, and many a morning he would be at the Davenant house before the good ladies were astir and before Roberta was off for her early session with old

Trommel, bringing with him Major Pomerane for chaperon and backer. The Major was a distant connection and could furnish an extra mount.

Roberta never could resist a horse, and Paul Fielding was clever enough to discover it. The three would be off in the charm of the early morning and come back for eight o'clock breakfast in the Davenant garden, where Miss Adelaide would join them, feeling rather wicked but none the less enjoying herself greatly.

She was older and feebler than in the days of Roberta's mother, and the girl's strong young spirit carried her easily away before the thought of resisting.

"You'll never accomplish it, my boy," said Major Pomerane once as the two went off together. He was rather fond of Paul and hugely interested.

"Might have done something a year ago, but she's got her head too full of those old fossils at the Roseberry Gardens. There one just lives until he fairly totters about the place, and then he dies. I believe a typewriter girl got out, but she never was of it—never was infected.

Roberta's got it and got it bad. You'd think that old gnome of a Trommel was a Calypso, or Circe.

"Besides, what's the gray-haired fellow's name that keeps coming all the time?"

"Herford," said Paul Fielding in disgust.

"That's it, Maurice Herford. He could buy and sell you and Paradise Park dozens of times over. He's another old dodderer over gardens. You may have the pleasure of seeing him and Roberta drive by in a handsome auto when you're afoot."

"If I had a good dog with me, there'd be some chance of getting her out," said Paul.

CHAPTER NINE

WOULD ye like to l'arn to bud, Miss Davenant?" inquired Michael.

"'Tis evident ye know all that's necessary about bloomin' an' blossomin', but I mean wid a buddin' knife an' a budstick an' Michael O'Connor and over by the Farm? I'm buddin' over there wid Pat McCrae. He's tyin' f'r me, but I can keep ahead of the two av yez."

"Indeed I would!" said Roberta.

"There's that f'r you." He handed her an ivory-handled, thin-bladed clasp-knife, and then a small bundle of twigs. "Ye're to be assistant, an' the assistant must carry the equipment."

The back road from the office was narrow and shaded. On either side, past a narrow fringe of young over-arching trees, stretched the nursery plantation. Along the fence was a tangle of trumpet-vine, with wide-throated, flame-coloured bells. There were rows and rows of the white baccharis, fluffy as seeding dandelion turned

shrub; the tall feathery coral of tamarisk bushes; smoke-trees in a purplish mist, reflecting wonderfully the faint haze of the August morning.

"I'm after thinkin'," commented Michael complacently, "that th' Almighty must have a high opinion of folks like you an' me an' Mr. Worthington an' Mr. Trommel *an'* Mr. Maurice J. Herford. He makes so many things to be enj'yed exclusively by us! The way most people call f'r plants, until ye teach thim better, makes me fair disgusted! Ye'd think the Almighty made no hedge but the California privet, and no shrubs at all, at all, but Hydrangea paniculata, and Spiraea Van Houttei, an' Berberis Thunbergii, p'raps a variegated weigela, an' maybe the common althea—that Oi w'u'dn't put in a Williamsburg backyard! That there wasn't a vine in the wor-rld but a Hall's honeysuckle and a niver a rose but a Crimson Rambler! 'Tis plain, I say, that he values you an' me an' Mr. Maurice J. Herford!

"Does anny one ask for that?" he demanded, pointing to a beautifully shaped shrub, with smooth, rounded foliage, like that of a miniature

orange tree, and small clustered berries of a wonderful blue, between peacock and turquoise. "'Tis Symplocus crataegoides, but niver a person calls for it, except Maurice J. Herford!"

They were now within sight of the fruit plantation, and brilliant in the landscape showed the red flannel shirt of Pat McCrae, as vivid as Garibaldi's.

"Yonder's the signal," said Michael; "'tis here the thrain stops."

He settled himself on a funny little bench a foot high and a foot and a half long, mounted on thick wooden runners like an old-fashioned home-made sled. He pointed to a companion one for Roberta.

"Now thin, ye've larnt how to tie after a graft from Trommel?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Thin take this raffia and tie after me. Not too tight or ye'll strangle, but tight enough; and watch how I bud! Tie every other wan, thin ye can keep up wid me an' leave enough f'r Pat McCrae."

Michael's fingers worked rapidly and deftly, but his mind went back in reminiscence.

"A year ago to-day I was buddin' also, not here but over yonder. And who sh'u'd I see standin' beside me but Mr. Maurice Herford.

"'Michael,' says he to me, 'will ye come abroad wid me, to thravel and see the gardens in England and France?' says he.

"'How can I?' says I. 'Look at my buddin' just begun.'

"'Whin will ye be t'rough?' says he.

"'The ninth day of September,' says I.

"And the ninth day of September, in the morning, comes Maurice J. Herford. I was halfway down the last row.

"'Ar-re ye through buddin', Michael?' says he. ''Tis the ninth day of September.'

"'I'll be whin I finish this row,' says I.

"He stands there an' says nothin' till the last tree is done.

"Thin he says, ''Tis the ninth day of September and 'tis Chuseday. The *Fürst Bismarck* sails on Thursday. Now will ye go?'"

"And you didn't go, Michael?"

"I cud'n't. What w'u'd the place do widout me? Besides, what w'u'd I do away from it? I'd be like a duck on a mountain-top."

"Let me do some now," said Roberta, who had been watching.

"Very well, and I'll tie f'r you. Mind ye don't cut too deep; just t'rough the bark an' careful wid the eyes. A clean, smooth cut; slip it under the bark wid just the eye stickin' out and 'twill niver know what's happened to it!"

Roberta did the operation fairly deftly for a beginner and presently she and Michael were hitching down the row, sideways, crab-fashion, Roberta ahead, Michael next, superintending and tying, moving along on funny little benches.

Soon they came alongside Pat McCrae, who was tying, in the next row, the young trees Michael had already budded.

McCrae was short and broad shouldered, with a grizzled beard, and clad in baggy trousers and bright red undershirt.

"'Tis war-rm," he remarked.

"It is," said Michael; "'tis always war-rm buddin', an' we've been doin' it in August f'r thirty years. But it's been war-rmer than to-day!"

"It has," assented McCrae. Then he

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coughed. "'Twas war-rmer at the battle of Gettysburg! Begor! but that was hot work."

"Were you there, McCrae?" asked Roberta, interested.

"Oi was," said McCrae firmly. "Oi was wan ov thim that resisted Pickett's charge. The bullets wint whistling by like it was hailstones and niver an umbrelly. There was wan wint t'rough me sleeve and grazed me ar-rm, and another t'rough the tail av me coat an' buried itsilf in a comrade's breast, who fell at me side, but we pressed in!"

"McCrae," said Michael reproachfully, "'tis sorry Oi am to hear ye say that. Where were ye a-goin' whin the innemy had a chanst at the flyin' tails av yer coat?"

"I'm tellin' yez there was a high wind. I just tur-rned a minute sideways to load me musket whin—whist, wint the bullet, t'rough me coat an' buried itsilf in one comrade's chist an' he fell at me side, mortally wounded! Thin, wid the bullets rainin' round me, Oi carried him to safety!"

"Wasn't it whin ye were sprintin' f'r safety that the bullet hit?"

"'Twas not!" replied Patrick, with dignity.

"But I thought," pursued Michael, "that 'twas the navy ye ware in, wid Farragut an' the sailor b'ys."

"Oi was," said McCrae. "Oi enlisted first in the navy. Oi was wid Farragut at Mobile. Oi was up in the foremast in char-rge av a gun mesilf, an' ould Farragut says to me, says he, 'Pat, me b'y, y'r as gallant a b'y as there is in the navy!' says he. 'There's me hand!' says he."

"But I thought ye was at Gettysburg," said Michael; "an' if I remember right, Mobile was on a Chuseday an' Gettysburg began on a Wed-ens-d'y."

McCrae nodded.

"'Tis so," he said, "they rushed us up t' help in th' fight. We wasn't in at the fir-rst day, but we were there f'r the second, and well was it f'r the Union we reached there in the nick av time!"

"Go long wid yez," said Michael.

Just then the gong sounded. "'Tis well," said O'Connor; "'tis like the cock crowin' f'r Saint Peter. 'Tis time ye stopped, McCrae!"

"I hope he goes to confession, the ould sinner," said Michael, as he and Roberta were walking back to the shop. Then he chuckled. "There's niver a battle in the war that Pat McCrae wasn't there! But I believe his story about th' bullet in the tail av his coat.

"'Tis proselytes we've been making, Miss Davenant, the morning. Turning common little heathen av seedling apples into children av grace. They'll niver be common apple trees again; they're Pyrus Malus Parkmanni, an' 'tis you an' me have converted and baptised them!"

CHAPTER TEN

AS USUAL on August mornings Major Pomerane sat on his veranda, a broad, comfortable veranda which overlooked his drive and his garden. The Major was broad and comfortable also—very comfortable he looked as he sipped his coffee, eyeglasses on his nose, the morning paper in his hand, pipe beside him on the table for future attention, and at his feet a shaggy English sheep dog. At a little distance lay a setter, his nose along a patch of the morning sunshine. The setter was dozing, occasionally opening one eye to see if his master had finished breakfast, then closing it again and resuming his dreams. Suddenly he lifted his head, opened both eyes, cocked an ear, and uttered a short, sharp bark. The Major laid down his paper, lifted his eyeglasses from his nose, and looked down the drive.

Paul Fielding was coming in at the gate, mounted on his big chestnut and riding slowly.

He rode up the drive, dismounted, fastened

his horse to the hitching post, and came up on the veranda.

"Morning," said the Major. "Just in time, Paul. Have some breakfast. Sam, bring another cup for Mr. Fielding, and hot rolls!"

"No, thank you, Cousin Jim, I don't want breakfast."

"What! At your age!" He looked keenly at his visitor. "Good Lord, Paul, you look as cheerful as a wet hen. What's the trouble?"

"Nothing," responded Paul gloomily.

"Well, well," said the Major briskly, "look at the pretty sunshine! Listen to the little birds! *Ain't dis a mighty pretty mornin'*," chanted his host.

"No, it 'ain't!'" said Paul.

"Never mind! No troubles in the world that good coffee and good tobacco and a good dog can't give a handsomer aspect! Better change your mind, son!" he said, as the darkey set the extra place at the table.

Paul shook his head and in silence flicked the dust from his boots with his riding whip. "Damn Roseberry Gardens!" he remarked at last.

Major Pomerane chuckled. "Tut, tut! Most interesting place, wonderful collection! Only commercial nursery in the country that ranks with an arboretum. Finest place in the world for a young man to——"

"Shucks!" said Paul.

"Um-m-m!" said the Major meditatively. "So I gather that our young friend Roberta has gone out to work in the gardens with the old fossils, like a properly conducted, businesslike person. She wouldn't go riding with you? Shocking taste! What are the young women of to-day coming to? Too bad!" finished the Major sympathetically. The setter got up and went over to Paul.

"Here, Michael," called Major Pomerane, "that young man isn't safe company for a nice doggie; he may bite."

"Michael!" echoed Fielding. "I thought this was old Zip Coon."

"Used to be Zip Coon and Tramp"—he indicated the sheep dog—"but I changed their names. I call them Michael and Maurice Herford—they work so well together."

"Damn Maurice Herford!" said Paul.

"Tut, tut! Don't be so belligerent. Fine man Herford! Finest collection of evergreens in the state; something of a scholar, too. Knows coins."

He looked at Fielding's face. "Too bad, son!" Then he added soberly: "Do you really care so much, Paul?"

"More than for anything else in the world, Cousin Jim! Good Lord! Why do you suppose I'm killing time here when I'm crazy to be down at Paradise Park, at the work I want to do?"

"Thought you wanted to do landscape gardening."

"That was Dad's idea. What I want to do is to get the old place back on a paying basis so we shan't have to sell off any—that's what I've got to do. I want to try the rice growing again. It was profitable years ago, it ought to be profitable now."

"Did you ever tell Roberta that?"

Fielding shook his head. "It's not the commercial side that interests her."

"Wrong tack, my boy! She'd respect you a heap more if you had something to do besides

dangling. You young ones make lots of fool mistakes. When you want something you just sit down beside it or stand in front of it like a three-year-old and holler for it. That's where the old fossils have you beaten to a finish—they're so mighty cool headed!"

"What do you know about it?" Paul asked suspiciously.

"Lots. Tell you what, son, a man who spends years in the observatory knows a heap more about earthquakes than the folk who are actually in them. When a man is engulfed in the hot ashes and lava of passion and sentiment," said the Major grandiloquently, "it is not easy for him to observe the proper direction his energies should take. I'll tell you one thing, son, those old fossils aren't rivals to be despised. 'Twouldn't hurt you to observe their methods. I never wanted to marry, but I know exactly how to go about it if I did. I'd have married Roberta's mother in a minute."

"Why didn't you?"

"Never saw her until Bob Davenant brought her here—and he was an old fossil. Sort of semi-animate Blackstone—all law books and

cases. I dare say there were plenty of good-looking young fellows down there who'd have taken Davenant's place. Lord! but she was sweet; loved gardens, too, but not like Roberta—no notebook or that sort of thing—more like a hummingbird. You'd see her every morning out there. I used to send her over roses at breakfast time, till Bob Davenant woke up and planted lots in their own garden. She galvanized him into more life those two years than all the Davenants had had for fifty. Got him quite human. Roberta's got her mother's colouring, but you can't judge always by that. There's a streak of Davenant in her you have to reckon with—poor child! I don't suppose she can help it."

"What do you mean, Cousin Jim?"

"Conscience. Old Adelaide's got enough to stock an institution Dare say Roberta would have honestly liked to have gone riding this morning instead of—what did you say she's doing?"

"Taking account of stock. Do you really think so?" Paul was brightening.

"Very likely," responded the Major serenely,

"and Herford is clever enough to know it. Bet you a new riding whip—and you'll need one if you keep on spoiling that—that he keeps on a straight business basis. Bet he doesn't say, 'Come, my dear young lady, and walk in the gardens with me this afternoon.' Not he! More likely it's: "Could you show me those evergreens? I could find them myself, but I've forgotten where the Picea section is.' Roberta sees it as a duty and Herford has a pleasant walk. You're all South Carolina and I'm part, and it takes us time to learn the ways of these New Englanders. They instinctively refuse a pleasure, but hitch it up with a duty and it goes every time. Has to be hitched tandem, too; Duty for the leader. Wheelhorse may be the whole thing —never mind—fix it as if the Duty was ahead, and you're all right. I know what I'd do if I were you!"

"What?"

"I'd play Paradise Park for all it's worth! It's a gorgeous old place; she'd feel the charm of it in a minute. I'd get her down there, take her coon-hunting, riding. She'd forget about the fossils and the gardens and you could omit

Herford—his handsome, price-tagged place isn't a patch on that! It'd be your innings."

"She wouldn't come," said Paul.

"Lord!" exclaimed the Major testily. "The lack of intelligence in this generation! No wonder your father asked me to look out for you! Make it a duty, man! Horticultural, social, filial! Talk to old Worthington. Tell him you want Miss Davenant's opinion on the camellias. Tell him how useful it might be for Roberta to get in touch with the older horticulture. Make friends with Aunt Adelaide; make love to her. She's actually got a restless fit, and when we old people get that, we're ripe for any suggestion. Invite *her* down for Christmas, not Roberta; tell her about the old-time elegance of the gardens at Paradise Park. She'll go—and Roberta will go with her as accessory. She'll ask Worthington to let her off, and Worthington'll see the horticultural chance and consent. Just you try it! Fine scheme. No charge!"

"It's a good idea," said Paul reflectively.

"Of course it's good!" said Major Pomerane complacently. "Ever go fishing, Paul?"

"Of course I have!"

"Real fishing, trout fishing—kind that takes intelligence?"

Paul Fielding nodded.

"Wouldn't have thought it!" said the Major, "but if ever you caught a real beauty you cast with a fly that you thought would interest. If it didn't, you tried another, and you kept yourself in the shadow. Strikes me you've been standing long enough in the broad sunshine slapping the water with a hook and worm. You've tested the 'My face is my fortune' rôle. Why not try something else?"

CHAPTER ELEVEN

WHETHER or not it was due to his cousin's advice, next morning saw Paul Fielding out early at Roseberry Gardens. Miss Davenant was not in the office. The young man considered a moment, then he took the narrow shaded road that led to the new plantation. It was cool and damp in the morning freshness. The sun had only flecked it as yet and the dew lingered heavily. On one side honeysuckle that had escaped from the garden climbed and hung in tangled masses on lithe young oaks, veiling the woods; on the other side, across a hedge, were the well-kept nursery rows of viburnums and sturdy, thick-set, fruiting honeysuckles; here and there a long trailing spray of eleagnus drooping with the weight of heavy scarlet berries.

It was still at Roseberry Garden, so still you could hear the three long notes of a meadowlark down the hill at the foot of the plantation.

A startled brown rabbit that had been sitting in the road, alert and watchful, whisked into the hedge.

"You needn't have been in such a hurry, Br'er Rabbit," said Paul to the vanishing cotton-tail. "Why couldn't you stay and wish me luck?"

Suddenly Fielding stopped; he heard voices.

"How many did you say, McCrae? Five hundred? And the group down below? Fifty? Five hundred and fifty," said a girl's voice slowly, as if its owner were writing down.

Fielding went quickly to the opening in the hedge that marked the quarter-acre, saw Roberta, notebook in hand, soft felt hat pushed back, head bent over the notes she was making. McCrae, in his Garibaldi shirt, had just limped off down another row.

There was a sudden, quick flush of greeting.

"Would you like a job?" she said. "I want to send McCrae back to Michael."

"Surely," Paul answered eagerly.

"I think we can get to the Prunus section before I have to go back; poor old Patrick is as slow as a barge. There are two hundred in each row, Mr. Fielding. Just see how many

Spinossissima there are in that broken row—about a hundred and fifty, I should think, shouldn't you? And will you take this stick," handing him a walking-stick notched at foot and half-foot intervals, "and get the average height?"

Paul did her bidding with alacrity, and the two worked rapidly and in silence. Paul was very happy and hummed to himself the Major's negro tune, which the day before had been a vexation.

"*Ain't dis a mighty pretty mornin', Good Lord, Good Lord?*"

"We must go back," said Miss Davenant suddenly, looking at her watch. "The mail will be in. Thank you *very* much!"

"It was a pleasure," said Paul truthfully.

"I'd shift with the men any time and take the field work instead of the office.

"Aren't they splendid little plants?" said Roberta.

"Miss Davenant," said Paul, "there's only one plant in Roseberry Gardens that really interests me and that I seem unable to get."

Roberta flushed. "It's a young evergreen,

Mr. Fielding, very prickly, and objects to transplantation as seriously as an Ilex opaca."

"Ass!" said Paul to himself, "why couldn't you leave well enough alone?"

But Roberta was unconcerned. "Would you like to see something?" she said. "But mind you don't tell."

She led the way through a gap in the hedge, pushed aside the lowest branch of a thick, prickly barberry and showed a little hollow. "Aren't they *darling?*"

Paul peered in to see six tiny baby rabbits. "Little cottontails!" he exclaimed delightedly.

"Better not pick one up," cautioned Roberta, "he might tell his mother and she'd move the whole family."

She let the branches slip back carefully, and then led the way to the road with her quick, silent woodman's step, Paul Fielding following.

"Anyway," Paul meditated happily, "I bet she wouldn't have shown the little bunnies to old Herford!"

At the office door she stopped. "I have work to do," she said, "lots of it, I'm sorry!"

"That means 'run along home?'" questioned Paul.

"Not in so many words, but I have to collaborate with Michael now, so you've given me all the time I ought to take. You've probably something to do yourself."

"But to-morrow?" asked young Mr. Fielding, "the Prunus you know." He spoke as if passionately interested in Prunus.

"Why not take me for assistant?" he continued. "I know I can get about on my feet a bit more briskly than your friend Pat McCrae; I am sure I can read a label quicker. Try me, and see if the work doesn't go faster. You told me the other morning what ought to be done before Mr. Worthington's return.

"You see I want to know the plants," he said, "and helping with the stock-taking is a very simple way of learning. Of course it's a 'chore' for you, but aren't you glad to help any one—'Lo the poor Indian!'—that sort of thing?"

Roberta laughed. "Very well, then, to-morrow."

So it came about that almost any noontide

in late August would have found Miss Davenant seated on a hummock of grass at the end of one plantation, like Miss Muffett upon her tuffett, only instead of curds and whey she was munching a sandwich, and beside her, likewise employed, was young Mr. Fielding of South Carolina. Thus they would sit for some time after the luncheon, Paul with his long arms clasped about his knees.

He had followed his cousin's advice scrupulously and assiduously. It worked beautifully. He kept strictly to business, and this devotion to the hard facts of life had brought him spacious, undisturbed mornings with the coppery-haired secretary, with only the bobolinks and old Patrick McCrae for occasional intruders; also these pleasing noontide hours when McCrae, dinner-pail in hand, would disappear between the rows of young trees; and the two would sit under the big linden for their workingman's midday rest.

In this cheerful fashion, varied by such excursions, the stock-taking continued. Duty was substituted for Pleasure in the early mornings, and as the wise old Major predicted, Fielding

found it quite possible to link Pleasure with it much of the time.

The days were sultry. Major Pomerane, even on his shaded piazza, thought it uncomfortable, but young Mr. Fielding was well content.

It was cooler by the big linden that stood at the intersection of grass paths dividing the plantations into half acres. From beneath it one could look down the long slope of the plantations and across the wide marshes through which the Meadowport creek trailed a lazy, uncertain serpentine, as if it had not the faintest idea where it was going, and did not care in the least. The marshes were beginning to colour and flush with the coming autumn; at long intervals came the note of a solitary meadow-lark like a sentinel's "all's well."

The two beneath the tree munched their sandwiches in silence and content. Roberta pulled off the old soft hat, pushed back her hair, and settled herself comfortably against the big linden. She scanned the young plantation that lay beyond them approvingly, noting the trench watering that had evidently been done

the day before, and how little the drought had affected the newly transplanted stock. At last she turned to her companion.

"There's not been one of those little hedge plants injured," she said. "The trench watering has kept them safe, and Uncle Rudolph moved them when I thought there was nothing for them but murder and sudden death."

But Fielding was looking beyond the plantation to the marshes and, in truth, beyond these marshes to those of Carolina, beside the Cooper, through which the river wound its indolent way.

"Trench watering," he echoed blankly, "what's that, Miss Davenant?"

"Didn't you see it done? The men plough a furrow, then fill it with water by letting the hose run until it has been filled several times. Next morning they run the cultivator over and cover up to prevent evaporation. Trench watering is a regular drought insurance."

"Yes, yes," he said absently, "very interesting, very clever of you to know it, but you needn't rub it into me so! It's not polite to show off!"

Roberta laughed. "You don't really care about gardening, Mr. Fielding."

"I care about you," was on the tip of the young man's tongue, but he looked at the unconscious profile of the girl beside him, thought of his cousin, the Major, and the wisdom of the ancients, and clasped his long brown hands closely about his knees.

"I'm not passionately interested in gardening," he admitted, "except in what I can take back with me and use down at Paradise Park. That's the truth. These rows and rows of little things that fascinate you and old Trommel so much seem to me too painfully new to be interesting. I honestly see very little beauty in nice little plants in rows. You ought to see the azaleas we have at home. Higher than your head and you can cut armfuls."

Roberta laughed. "Mr. Worthington would say you had no 'vision,'" she said.

"And I suppose he and Herford and old Trommel have?" said Paul discontentedly.

"They see heaps of possibilities, whole worlds that some of them are expected to conquer! I don't see them quite like that, but I love to

think up places for them. I'd like to see those flowering apples—over in the next section—the ones Michael and I budded—used on a terrace, clipped into the form of standard roses—I think it would be good. Those others I would have planted beside a stone wall with the poet's narcissus for company."

"Those little plants are just babies; they haven't yet gone out to make their way in the world. It isn't fair to expect so much of them. But these are very important years, I assure you; here they get their character, their impress. You see we have to care for them very much, for we never know what treatment they get when they leave. It's appalling the roughness with which some people stick plants into the ground or leave them about unplanted. Michael had to go last week to see what was wrong with a tree that the man who bought it said he couldn't make grow, and what do you think he found?" She laughed.

"Can't guess," said Fielding.

"He found the man sitting beside the tree, in his backyard, the soil scooped away from half the roots so that he could watch it better.

I believe he spent hours every day in that manner."

Paul Fielding laughed. When one is five and twenty and the world going pleasantly, one laughs easily.

"Were you ever South?" he asked abruptly.

"No," she answered, "never. But my father used to tell me about it. He thought it wonderful, but he never took me there. I know about your big camellias at Paradise Park that Mr. Worthington says would fill the office, each one."

"There are only four as large as that," said Fielding, "and those stand, one at each corner where the rose garden used to be. They were brought from Japan in 1750, but there are oceans of little ones; they grow up thick in the grass just under the big camellias. There's an avenue of liveoaks as old or older than the camellias, great old giants whose tops meet overhead; the avenue must be a hundred feet wide, and I know it's a quarter of a mile long. That's one approach. The other is from the river that winds in and out between the marshes, like that little creek winds below, only it's much larger—it's a *river*. The oaks are not

slim little things such as you have in your woods, but big enough to make a dozen lindens like this one we're under. You could build a country house in the branches; they come down to the edge of the marshes and fringe the river. There's a spidery-looking wharf that stretches out into the water—a sort of centipede affair with the piles for legs. That's where we land when we come up by boat. The house isn't far from the river and you catch the scent of the honeysuckles almost as soon as you land. There are big live oaks about the house and at night they cast queer strange shadows. We have wonderful moonlight down there. The old house is quiet and brooding; it has been through a good deal and feels like it wasn't sure that happiness had come to it yet. I know what would bring it! It's a wonderful thing to bring happiness to a place. Cousin Jim says that's what your mother did for the Davenant house; he says it's been a different place ever since."

"Tell me more about your Paradise Park," said Roberta.

"There's little to tell," said Fielding. "It's run down, going to pieces, but I love every inch

of the blessed old place. It's like seeing some one you care for in misfortune. I want, more than I want anything else, except one thing, to see prosperity come back to it. Along the marshes, up and down beside the river, are what used to be rice-fields. Rice has been grown successfully there; there's no reason why it shouldn't be again. I wanted to try it, but my father was so anxious that I shouldn't settle down there at Paradise Park without a trial of something else that I came North to have a try on landscape gardening. But I reckon there isn't anything better if you looked from the Gulf to Canada. There's an old race track where my grandfather used to train his horses—we have some right good horses there yet. You ought to see a colt I have! I believe there's phosphate in the land—there's some at Ashley Place just above. But we'd have to sell some land to work that and lose some of the big live-oaks. I'd rather rebuild the broken dykes and go to rice growing. I want more than I want anything, as I told you, to see prosperity and happiness come back to the old place. But how? That's the question."

"I don't know. There must be dozens of ways. That's for you to find out. Life's like a Fairy Story. You find the right word and you unlock the door. You might dig up those oceans of little camellias and pot them and sell them to Uncle Rudolph for stocks. Maybe they're the *Sesame*."

"I suppose I might do that," said Fielding slowly. "I never thought of it that way."

"Surely you could. And you could cut azalea branches and send great hampers of them to town for sale. If you cut where you ought to prune, the plants won't be hurt. And you could raise thousands of boxcuttings—while you're mending the dykes and waiting for the rice plantations."

"How did you think of that?" said Paul Fielding.

"Commercial mind," answered Roberta. "Besides, that's what I want to do when I know enough—grow plants—lots and lots of them, rare ones, lovely ones—have greenhouses and greenhouses, and send the plants all over the country. Just you wait and see!"

CHAPTER TWELVE

IN SEPTEMBER Mr. Horace Worthington returned. The old gentleman had been summering in the mountains, watching the coming and going of the summer folk, interested in a detached way as if the life were a play and his shady piazza-corner a box at the theatre. For the rest, the folk with whom he really kept company were Doctor Johnson and Boswell, Plato and Sir Thomas Browne, and he looked at the trees with the eye of a connoisseur, dreaming about his new hedge-plant and a method of growing magnolias which should make transplanting as safe as if the little trees were in pots.

On his first morning at the gardens, just as a devoted mother after a brief absence must first see her babies, Mr. Horace Worthington went to the "little houses" where were the baby seedlings in benches—azaleas only two or three inches tall, tiny evergreens, taxus, and

Abies, and Picea, all carefully ranged like small soldiers, though it might be eighteen or twenty years before they would be doing their work.

Whoever grows trees lives in the future, builds for the future, and must put aside haste and impatience as foolishness. That is why so many statesmen have been notable tree planters; they are able to look ahead and to build for the future.

"That little thing!" say the impatient, hurrying folk, "it will be *years* before it will look like anything! I must have something that will show *now*—something for immediate effect." So they plant the annuals; and the trees that would make each little place a home remain unplanted. In winter the gardens are bare and in early spring there is no budding nor blooming to cheer with the first breath of newcoming life.

But now the old gentleman bent tenderly over tiny trees whose growth he could not possibly hope to see, diminutive "taxus" seedlings which carried his mind to their forbears, the great yew hedges of England, two or three centuries old.

"Such a pity," he murmured, "that our climate is so difficult for them." Then his face lighted and he went to the next house to see his idol, the hedge plant of the future, the new Ilex crenata, or Japanese holly.

Rudolph Trommel was in the ilex house and the two old men, one a scholar and poet, the other scientist and workman, with the devotion of parents bending over the crib of a new baby, leant together over the branches filled with the tiny leaved bronze-green evergreen.

"One hundred thousand, we haf," said Rudolph Trommel, patting his broad chest.

"It is the hedge plant of the future," said Horace Worthington, glowing with enthusiasm. "It will be to America what the Irish yew is to England, but even more! The leaves are finer, neater. It has uniformity without monotony, denseness with lights and shadows. It will give protection such as no other plant affords. Think what that hedge would be in a rose garden—a background of precisely the right shade and density. The hemlock hedge is sombre; this will give a wall of green without the sombreness. It will mean the revival of

topiary work. People may even become genuinely, intelligently interested in gardens, in horticulture! Can you not see it, Trommel?"

"Yes, yes, that iss so; but we haf not yet assured ourselfs of its hardiness."

"Nineteen years we have had plants in the specimen grounds and no climate change has injured them in the least," answered Horace Worthington, enthusiastically.

Old Trommel nodded. "It iss a wicked und ungrateful climate. Nineteen years, yes; perhaps twenty und that climate says 'No.'"

Horace Worthington sighed. "It sometimes seems as if the Lord dealt with modern Americans in the matter of gardens as with the Egyptians, and for the same reason (because of the hardness of their hearts) and sent plagues and difficulties upon them. When I was a boy fruit growing was easy, and luscious, beautiful fruit we had, apricots and peaches and grapes; now it is obtained only at the price of eternal vigilance!"

"It iss inefitable," responded Trommel. "We reap what we haf sowed. Nature—she iss inexorable; we haf destroyed the balance with

our destruction of birds und of trees und so fort, und we pay. The Herr Gott iss very heafy on people who blunder. In nature it iss better to be efil und know your work than it iss to be virtuous und blunder. It iss not vice, it iss not virtue that iss punished und rewarded, it iss ignorance. Not to know iss the sin."

"Trommel, Trommel," said the old gentleman reprovingly, "that's a most immoral doctrine!"

"It iss true," said old Rudolph calmly. "Und the trouble with most doctrine iss that it iss not true. It iss based on theory and not on experience. That iss why so many good people are fools; they haf not the courage for experiment. What they call 'Faith' iss shut your eyes und chump!"

Horace Worthington sighed. "Intelligence is not a moral quality—nature demands intelligence and skill. That's all. And the truth is with the dreamers and the poets, Trommel; the visionaries of one generation are the leaders in thought of the next, the men who can see!"

The two old men passed out of the little houses and along a broad grassed path to the open



frames where were the young grafted plants, set out from the houses from their first winter—young evergreens, Japanese maples, rare evergreens. "Not one has been lost," said Rudolph proudly.

"Look at the colour, Trommel!" exclaimed Mr. Worthington, with a wave of his hand toward the plantation of euonymus they were approaching, where the symmetrical, stiff branched alatus had turned a deep, brilliant rose colour, from the base to the topmost leaf. "Our gardeners do not know how to avail themselves of it. They cannot look squarely, unbiasedly at the future or the present—they copy—copy—English gardens, when our climate will not encourage the English rose garden; and Italian gardens! The letter, always the letter, when it is the spirit they should take! The ordered beauty of the English garden—yes, by all means! And the garden brought close to the house; the proportion and balance and sense of values of the Italian gardens. But the material must be our own. 'The spirit maketh alive, the letter killeth.' Let them take from the older gardens their impulse, their sincerity,

their readiness to experiment with new things, their belief in their own taste. We are servile, afraid to trust ourselves. People's minds are hampered by the past. They look at the present with preconceived notions. They cannot visualize the future. Not yet have we the type of gardening that fits this country!"

Rudolph Trommel nodded. "But when you haf a climate that iss in some parts Siberia und iss in another part the Riviera, und iss in another the Desert of Sahara, it iss not easy to fit with a type of gardening."

"But that is just it," said the old gentleman eagerly. "Variety, Trommel, variety, that is the keynote of our gardening; and our landscape men know nothing, practically nothing of our silva, they are ignorant of dendrology! This country of ours could be a marvel for the scope and range of its horticulture—for the brilliance of its gardening. Japan, England, France and Italy—we could make them all into a living, vivid unity of our own, just as our English language has taken from Latin, Greek and French, and enriched its own Anglo-Saxon! Nothing in England or the Continent is com-

parable to our American spring. Our gardens could be exquisite with rapid, wonderful changes from March until late June. Our summers are hot with a fierce sun; what we then crave in our garden is shade, coolness, restfulness. A chance for the "green thought in a green shade." And do we have it? Look at the elaborate, noisy blaze of colour in August in our most elaborate gardens—and the family naturally and inevitably stay on the beach or go to the mountains. Our landscape men have each his preferred type of garden. He applies it to whatever house falls under his control."

"That iss so!" responded Trommel. "They are afraid to experiment; afraid to use what intelligence they have."

"If they would even obey their instinct it would be better. Look at the old seacoast New England towns! What the gardens there most sorely need is shelter, protection! They have needed it for more than two hundred years; not yet has it been given them. When the owners of small places, of little gardens, become genuinely interested in horticulture, then we shall have American gardens of interest and

variety. It must be a growth—that interest—and I believe from that class. So shall we escape from the deadly monotony."

"Mr. Worthington," said old Trommel slowly, placing his hand on his portly stomach, "I belief I know the reason why the aferage man in the suburbs iss so little interested in horticulture. The reason may surprise you, but it iss true. It iss the lawn-mower!"

"The lawn-mower!" echoed Horace Worthington.

"Yes, when the aferage man comes home from work in his office and wishes to divert himself by work in his garden, what offers itself as needing imperatifely to be done? Is it to prune his roses, to stake his dahlias, to inspect his rare plants? Something that requires skill, intelligence, insight, und therefore iss interesting? No! It iss to push the lawn-mower. Always when he thinks of work about his place, it iss the idea of that excellent and useful instrument that presents itself. His work iss probably machine-like, und when he tries gardening that iss machine also. No intelligence required, just persistence.

"Und when he has it done, there iss no sense of accomplishment, no feeling that he has assisted in the efolution of something beautiful. No! The lawn looks better; that iss all. In two or three days he must do it again. Whatefer impulse he had toward gardening iss thus diferted by the constant and exclusif presentment of the uninteresting, the mechanical, the onerous."

"That may be true, Trommel," said Mr. Worthington reflectively.

"It iss true," asserted the other, "und that iss why the interest of women in gardens iss greater. They are not expected to operate the lawn-mowers. That task falls upon the husband or reluctant son, or it iss hired. When an American first has a little place, he wishes to 'beautify,' and all he can think iss lawn and annuals. The annuals iss weeding, and watering the lawn iss lawn-mower. By the time he would learn to think something different, his interest iss exhausted.

"For mineself, I rest myself in my little garden. I haf an arbour, one, two, three comfortable chairs. I sit und smoke und think.

From where I sit I oferlook my garden. I see a branch of my espalier iss growing wrongly. When I finish my pipe, I go and put it right. I go back; I smoke again; I am pleased. I say to myself, 'To-morrow morning, early, I will stake those chrysanthemums.' It iss no effort, no burden; it iss easy; it combines itself with rest und enjoyment. The usual garden combines itself only with labour. That iss a mistake. We are told that a man must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. That is well, but when he sets about enjoyment there should be as little sweat of the brow as possible."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MICHAEL O'CONNOR sat in the big chair beside a table covered with horticultural magazines, stroked his white Bismarckian moustache and smiled to himself as he watched the young secretary arrange papers and put her desk in order preparatory to leaving. Presently he heaved a sigh.

"Ye miss so much that's useful and instructive, Miss Davenant, be stocktakin' in the mornin's wid the long lad that's pursuin' horticulture round about Roseb'ry Gardens, (though 'tis my opinion he'll never catch her). 'Tis a shame! 'Tis here in the office that things happen."

"What did I miss, Michael?" she asked. "Mr. Maurice J. Herford?"

"'Twas no one av importance," said Michael, "only another lad afther horticultural instruction, like the wan you had wid you, and come to the fountain head. But ye should have seen Mr.

Worthington! He was grand! Bullet-headed was this lad, more round than long, and close-cropped as to hair as a convict. He came out on the eliven train and drove out fr'm th' station in a carriage, he did.

"'Is this Roseb'ry Gardens?' says he, lookin' intelligently at the sign over the office door wid the letters as big as his head.

"'It is,' says I.

"'I wish to see Mr. Worthington,' says he, 'Mr. Horace Worthington!'

"'Show him in, Michael,' says Mr. Worthington, who was standing in the door av his private office.

"'I'm not sure I have time to get out,' says the bullet-headed wan, but he looked at his watch. 'Oh, yis, twinty minutes,' says he, and he climbed out afther all, but he didn't go into the old gentleman's private office.

"'I was told that you know about trees,' says he to Mr. Worthington.

"'Something, perhaps,' says the old gintleman.

"'Well,' says the bullet-headed wan, 'I'm to have the app'intment av Inspector av Trees

f'r the Port of New York,' says he, 'to protect our agriculture an' horticulture fr'm insidjous disease, for the ignorant foreigners might sind to us trees that ar–re not hilthy,' says he, 'and I want ye sh'u'd tell me which tree is which,' says he, 'an' how ye can tell if a bunch av trees is not all right.'

"The old gintleman just stared at him like he couldn't believe his ears.

"'Well?' says me bullet-head, inquiring.

"'Young man,' says Mr. Worthington, ponderous as a steam-roller, 'what you need is an *edu-ca-tion!*' and he turned to go into his office.

"The bullet-head's jaw dropped. 'But I've got twinty minutes,' says he.

"'An edu-ca-tion,' says the old gintleman, 'is not to be obtained in twinty minutes!' an' wid that he goes into his private office. The interview was ended.

"The bullet-head stands around aimless-like for a while, then he gets into his carriage f'r to go back to his job av enlightening the nation."

Roberta laughed. "Didn't any one take pity on him?"

Michael nodded. "I gave him a catalogue. I c'u'd let no wan that had hands to hold it or a pocket f'r to put it in l'ave the place widout that. But how is it that Mr. Herford is not out here yet, and 'tis the tenth day of Septimber?"

"How should I know, Michael? He's your client. Very likely he bought all the trees he needed in the spring."

Michael shook his head.

"'Tis not so. F'r ten years, before the first week in Septimber was over, Mr. Maurice J. Herford has been out at Roseb'ry Gardens, buyin' trees. 'Buyin' trees,' says Mr. Worthington, 'is a noble passion.' Some poor souls has it f'r buyin' books, sinseless and unresponsive as they ar-re. Once an intelligent tree buyer always a tree buyer. A man gets the habit, an' 'tis a foine habit. 'Tis that way wid Mr. Herford. Always there's new things, an' always me foine little man must have thim on his place. Depind upon it, Miss Davenant, whiniver you see a man buyin' trees well and intilligintly and stidily, season afther season, year afther year, ye can put it down that he has a

foine mind. Who was it had the foinest collection av evergreens on Long Island? 'Twas Mr. Richard Hinery Dana at Dosoris. Hinery Ward Beecher was another intilligint man that knew trees well, though he was not so well up in rare evergreens; pomology was his specialty. There was Mr. Bancroft, who they tell me wrote foine hist'ries. I don't know about his hist'ries, but he knew enough about roses to have had a job at Roseb'ry Gardens. Francis Parkman was another foine rosarian, but I belave he had bad hilth, poor man. 'Twould sure have been worse if he'd known nothing about roses. An' I've heard that Joseph Chamberlain, the Premier av England, knew orchids. 'Tis the best thing I've heard av him, an' it may save his sowl from what it deserves f'r his cru'lty an' indifference to the sufferin's av Ireland, though that's not sayin' but he'd a foine headpiece if he'd have used it right. 'Tis the same in everything. But these lads that come around, not to buy, but to take up workin' people's toime widout doin' anything but troublin' people that ar-re wor-rkin', wid questions—they're a sad lot."

In truth Michael O'Connor did not take kindly to horticultural aspirants, and from him Paul Fielding had but little assistance. Trommel would answer questions in a bluff, gruff fashion, but clearly and definitely; Mr. Worthington, with elaborate, old-fashioned courtesy and detail; but it was little aid that O'Connor would give the "long lad" in his newly awakened interest in camellias. He did not take kindly to his visiting the big cool greenhouse where were the half-hardy plants. The old workmen were cordial enough, but could give scant information.

For instance, the second morning that Paul went to the camellias house he found old Timothy Cullen, one of the most aged of the Garden's retainers, scrubbing the pots with careful, trembling fingers.

"Good-morning, Mr. Fielding," he said in a high, quavering voice, "God bless yez! The saints bless yez! God bless yez body and soul! May all the saints have care of yez."

"Thank you, thank you," said Paul Fielding hastily. He watched in silence a moment and then: "Why are you scrubbing the pots?"

Old Timothy looked at the pot in his hand. "The boss towld me to. 'Tis somethin' about the pores an' the cirkilation. They sicken if they aren't clane. That's all I know! Ask the boss."

Just then Michael O'Connor entered, his blue gardener's apron secured with a string about his waist, a bunch of raffia stuck in the string.

"Oh, 'tis you!" he said. "Good mornin'. I was wonderin' for who it was that Timmy was callin' down the saints! And what is it this mornin'?"

"I wanted to see the camellias."

"They're there," said Michael curtly. He picked up one. "That's Abby Wilder." He set it down and took up another. "Ye c'n see them, the label's there."

"Do you grow them here?"

"Hundreds of thim. Mr. Trommel, he grafts thim. If you're round here thin ye can see him."

"What stock does he use?"

"What stock sh'u'd he? 'Tis Camellia japonica!"

"The single red?" asked Fielding eagerly.

"The same," responded Michael.

Paul Fielding pulled out his notebook, then felt for his pencil. "Must have lost it!" he exclaimed. "I'll be back in a moment. I dare say I can find one in the office."

"Belike," responded Michael. Then to Timothy as the door closed: "Quick, Timmy, the tobacco!"

"Eh, what?" the old man quavered.

"We must smoke out. 'Tis very necessary."

"Smoke out?" The old man got up slowly. "'Tis not a week yet, Mister O'Connor; ye're forgettin'."

"Quick wid ye, Timmy! 'Tis not forgettin' I am! It's rememberin'. 'Tis a saint's day! Saint Maurice of Herford, the patron saint av gardens; ye will have bad luck wid camellias the whole year if ye don't smoke thim out to exorcise the imps av darkness and dhrive thim away!"

The tobacco, placed in little piles along the greenhouse paths, was already burning when Paul Fielding returned.

"Stay as long as ye like," urged Michael hos-

pitably. "I'm sorry I can't stay wid ye, but I've to see to unpackin' these boxes in the shed."

In a few minutes the greenhouse door opened and the young man emerged coughing and sputtering.

"What!" said Michael indignantly; "have the b'ys begun to smoke the house? 'Tis a shame!"

"Ugh! what rotten tobacco!" said Paul Fielding.

"'Tis the Hod Carrier's Revinge!" said Michael grimly.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

NOW that the stock-taking was finished and Henry Stirling, faithful, industrious, and colourless, was back in the office, Roberta returned to her old habit of spending the early mornings in the gardens, sometimes with old Trommel, oftener alone. And Paul, who might have learned considerable from Trommel or Mr. Worthington, rode again with Major Pomerane.

Roberta had learned from Trommel something of the horticulturist's interest in variety, in the slight and important differences that make the variation in species, and from Horace Worthington something of his keen interest in habit, character, and form. "People do not understand *habit*," the old gentleman would say impatiently. "Their only interest in plants is in their brief seasons of blooming—important, of course, but in grouping, in combining, it is *habit, character*, that should be considered. Our landscape men do

not understand this; they do not know horticulture! Their knowledge of plants is limited, painfully limited! Yet they should know them as an artist knows his palette."

The old gentleman was fond of expounding his theories to Roberta, and found her a far more sympathetic listener than either Trommel, who would calmly say, "That iss not so," or Michael O'Connor, who would assent to everything with a "yis, yis," and then shift the subject. He would walk through the specimen grounds with her of a late afternoon and explain his ideas of landscape art.

The gardens were very lovely now, but it was a quiet loveliness. There was a soft haziness in the colour, a touch of the stillness that comes with the end of summer, a peaceful beauty, very different from the dazzling, passionate radiance of the springtime. "Ceres," as Mr. Worthington would say, "is a far more placid deity than young Flora." The broad squares of azaleas which had been a riot of splendour and brilliance were now merely squat, sturdy little green-clad Hollanders, with no hint of the gorgeousness that had been theirs and

would be theirs again. They had "gone back to the Silence" as completely as Fire and Bread and Water in the Maeterlinck play.

Here and there an eager hastening plant came out bravely in its autumn finery before its fellows—such as the winged euonymus, which was flushed a deep rose colour from the base to the topmost stem, and andromeda, with copper-coloured leaves and a seeding head that looked like the plumes of blossoming corn. There were regiments of little Japanese evergreens, gay in their green and gold livery, which had been unnoticed among the summer's magnificence and now came into their own; there were rows of white pine, holding up tiny candles, playing at being Christmas trees.

Most interesting of all were the berries on the fruiting shrubs, some of them showing a secondary effect which rivalled many a spring beauty, such as the euonymus known as Sieboldianus with clusters of heavy coral-pink pendants almost as charming as Japanese plum blossoms, each one splitting, bitter-sweet fashion, to disclose scarlet fruit.

"Madame Nature is putting on her jewels for

the evening," said Roberta to herself as she walked along the broad grassy paths. There were clusters of jet on the privet that were indeed jewel-like, garnet-coloured fruit on the callicarpa, scarlet and crimson berries on barberry and viburnum, while on the white-fruited dogwood were small ivory berries set off by coral stems. The blues were exquisite—peacock-coloured berries clustered on the silky dogwood; symplocus of a wonderful turquoise blue were set off admirably by the smooth, shining bronze-green foliage; blues from the soft, dull "old blue" of the spirea to the deep and exquisite tint of the few fringed gentians that made their home deep in the grass where the lower plantation neared the marshes.

"Blue," Mr. Worthington would say to Roberta with an eloquent wave of his hand toward symplocus berries or the soft, dull spirea blossoms, "is a marvellous colour. Nature is prodigal of it in sea, sky, and distant landscape, chary of its use in vegetation but most careful and accurate. Hidden in depths of green, as in the gentians; spreading through the grass, as the Houstonia and the purple crocus, it gives

from a distance the effect of water stealing through the grass and reflecting the sky. Always it is in close and beautiful combination with green. That is what Keats observed when he speaks of blue as

"'Married to green in all the sweetest flowers.'

Shakespeare's 'violets dim,' does not mean that there is anything indefinite or indistinct about the colour. He refers to the charming way in which the flower, half hidden in green, is but dimly seen—now visible, and now not. We perfect its cultivation and carefully destroy this lovely effect.

"Our landscape men should go to the poets," he continued impatiently, "not only for inspiration, but for ideas. People, especially Americans, make the mistake of thinking that because a poet's expression is beautiful, his ideas are necessarily unsound and impractical, yet theirs is the clearest vision.

"Wordsworth and Walter Scott were admirable gardeners; Tennyson had a good sense of proportion; then there is 'Knight's Landscape,' which every park commissioner should read.

I am not so sure about Shelley. Exquisite as his poetry is, and at home as he was in sky, wind, and cloud, he was curiously unobservant in the matter of plants. In that otherwise beautiful poem, 'The Sensitive Plant,' you will remember that the lady who removed from the garden the destructive insects, merely carried them to another place and there liberated them to commit further depredations.

> "'The poor banished insects whose intent,
> Although they did harm, was innocent.'

He let his humanitarianism run away with the horticulture! Robert Browning, you remember, first became aware he was a poet when sitting under a large copper beech, reading in the moonlight from Keats and Shelley. Undoubtedly Camberwell was not an artistically ideal suburb for a young poet, but who in our suburbs would think of reading Keats or Shelley on an electric-lighted porch open to the street, the only tree in sight a miserable Carolina poplar!

"Who plants beeches now? And it is the most poetic and mystic of trees, linked with

mythology for centuries. Beside it the Norway maple is a raw, cheap edition of the newest, most worthless novel compared to the Divina Commedia!"

The young secretary was not so keenly distressed at the lack of poetic imagination among landscape gardeners as she possibly should have been. It was too exquisite a morning. The broad grass paths were so dewy as to wet her thick boots, and the heavily hung jewelled branches of shrubs brushed her coat as she walked along rapidly, hands thrust deep into her capacious pockets. At the end of the azalea plantation she turned, passed through an opening in the hedge, and came suddenly on young Mr. Fielding, of Paradise Park, South Carolina.

He also had been early afield, for his riding boots were wet and in his coat was a bit of symplocus berry. He pulled off his cap, baring a shock of light hair to the morning sunshine.

"Good morning!" he said happily, his gray eyes lighting with pleasure. "So you, too, are out early?"

"Catching the worm," said Roberta. "Are

you specimen hunting, Mr. Fielding? The stock-taking is over."

The young man laughed and shook his head. "Jes' loungin' 'round an' sufferin', like Br'er Tarrypin," said he.

Roberta laughed also: Paul Fielding's laugh was infectious. "You should quote Doctor Watts instead of Uncle Remus; that's what Aunt Adelaide would tell you. 'How doth the little busy bee improve each shining hour!' That's what I used to be told when I went off in the early mornings and came back with wet shoes and wet frock instead of using the time at my lessons!"

"Dear Miss Davenant," said Paul, "there are some hours that need no improvement and this is one of them. It's a great mistake to improve anything that's already shining! Aren't you gardener enough for that? I rode out on Captain; he's fastened over there by Washington's residence. We went round the edge of the marshes, and all the way I was hoping I'd find you just here. And I have. And it's a perfect morning. I met you here in May. Do you remember? You were singing."

Roberta nodded. "It's a bad habit of mine."

"Mighty pretty habit. I remember what you were singing, a scrap of the Flower Song, 'Revellez à son âme le sécret de ma flamme,'" he chanted cheerfully. "See, I have them for you—blessed dew on them and all. Will you have them?"

He held out two fringed gentians, looking at her with such sudden intensity of feeling that the girl flushed and hesitated.

"You had the flowers last time; it's far more correct this way," he hastened to reassure her in his most casual tones. "Miss Adelaide would say so."

Roberta took the gentians and held them, looking at their wonderful colour. She could never quite make out Fielding. The Southerner in her took an attempt at love-making lightly and carelessly, but the New Englander in her held it to be a very serious thing, as serious as the Day of Judgment, so to feel deeply yet to speak lightly was a bit difficult for her to understand.

"They are lovely," she said, looking at the gentians, "the most beautiful colour that ever

was made—the sea and the sky and the night——"

Paul Fielding did not speak for a few moments, then he said:

"I'm off to my native haunts, Miss Davenant. Going down to Paradise Park the end of the week. This is nice, mighty nice, but it's dalliance. I'm going back to the rice-fields and the big oaks, and I'm going to make that blessed old wilderness of a place do something besides blossom like a rose. It's going to be industrious —like me—and produce a comfortable livelihood. There's going to be real Northern energy down there! I know what I want to do with it now."

"We've no monopoly on energy," laughed Roberta.

"No, but you like to be uncomfortable, to leave out all the pretty things of life, else you don't feel that you're working seriously. That's what I'm going to do: leave out the pretty things."

Roberta smiled. "I'm sorry you are going."

"Miss Adelaide's coming down for Christmas!"

"What!" exclaimed Roberta.

"Yes, she is," asserted Paul Fielding. "Just you ask her! She's coming down to see the old plantation, and I've promised her a recipe for a conserve of roses, and she's going to show us how marmalade should be made."

"Aunt Adelaide!" Roberta was incredulous.

"Aunt Adelaide," repeated Fielding. "You've no idea how adventurous she can be. Maybe I'll have her riding and 'coon-hunting before the visit is over! And Lordy! I've got to go down now to try if I can get old Calliope to have the house sufficiently spick and span. You'd better come to look after Miss Adelaide," he continued casually. "I've a horse that you'd like—Roanoke—and 'coon-hunting by torchlight's right good fun."

"Is it?" said Roberta doubtfully.

"Oh, yes," said Fielding eagerly, "and it would be so instructive! You can find out lots about early experiments in indigo. The first botanic garden in the country was at Charleston. Up the river is all that's left of the stockade wall of Old Dorchester, where your Puritans came down two centuries ago to uplift us, but

got tired and went back. There's really abundant horticultural interest," he said gravely. "There may be a business proposition for you down there."

"I'll think about it." But what she thought made Roberta flush a little, and a meddlesome breeze caught a lock of her bronze hair and blew it across her face.

The young fellow had a sudden impulse to take the girl in his arms and kiss her flushed cheek where the bright hair rested. He resolutely thrust both hands in his pockets. "'The Place and the One,'" he said to himself, "but it isn't the 'Time.'" A moment later he lifted her hand, the right hand that held the gentians, and kissed the fingers. "I came out to say good-bye," said he. "Will you wish me luck with the old plantation?"

"The best in the world."

"If you really wish it, I shall have it, and I thank you." He turned and went quickly through the opening in the hedge.

Roberta stood looking at the gentians in her hands; then she went slowly back to the office.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ROBERTA returned to the dingy little office without so much as looking at the heavily berried shrubs that brushed her sleeve and had so engrossed her attention a short half-hour before. She put the gentians in a glass of water on her desk and took up her morning's work, but she was rather absent-minded. The trouble was that part of her brain persisted in staying down where the young oaks marked what Michael called the End Entirely, and her vision remained at the break in the hedge through which Paul Fielding had disappeared.

She smiled to herself, whimsically, at his very obvious secret, as one smiles at a child's painstaking and fruitless concealment, for a girl of nineteen is at some points ages older than a man of nine and twenty, and Paul was only twenty-six. Women are nearer, curiously nearer, to the heart of things. The Serpent must have had several conversations with Mother Eve

before the crucial step, and she had doubtless sampled many of the apples of wisdom before she thought of offering one to Adam. Although knowing perfectly well what was in his mind, Roberta was relieved that Paul had not forced an issue, had not made it necessary for her to say what she would not like to have said; she was glad that he had not "spoiled things." Yet something in her, shy and reluctant, wished he had not left quite so much unspoken.

She pushed back the coppery hair, settled a hairpin or two snugly, by way of moral emphasis after the manner of women, and turned resolutely to her work.

Brief moments of poetry are followed rapidly enough by prose in this work-a-day world, and prose in a concrete form came definitely before Roberta.

"'Tis a teacher," said Michael O'Connor; "'tis nature study she's afther. Maybe you'd be good enough, Miss Davenant—she says she knows you. I've no time for the likes of her—I know the kind—she'll not be buyin' a thing. It'll just be breakin' branches an' askin' questions."

Roberta left her desk and turned to meet the visitor that Michael presently brought to her—tall and angular with pale brown hair worn high over a high forehead.

"Good afternoon, Miss Ross," said Roberta, recognizing her directly.

"I want some nature material, Miss Davenant; stuff for a nature talk, you know, that I'm going to give on Monday. You must have some things out here that will do. Those are rather pretty—those blue things—what are they?" She nodded in the direction of the gentians.

Instinctively Roberta put out her hand and moved them to a less conspicuous position. "Gentians," she answered briefly, then, to distract her visitor's attention, "Won't you come out? I dare say we can find some things you would like for the children."

The visitor grated on her mood—grated abominably.

"What are those little green things?" pointing a finger at some thrifty young roses. "What's the freak red bush?" She indicated a flaming euonymus.

Roberta took out her budding knife and cut for her visitor some sturdy, hard-wooded things —branches of bitter-sweet, dogwood, privet in berry, explaining to her the bird's liking for the ivory candidissima berries. "I don't mind her having those," she said to herself. "They've no feelings to hurt."

Seeing Michael at the end of a path, she went hastily to him. "Do take her, Michael! She's worse than a dealer!"

"Is she so," said Michael sympathetically. "Well, I'll finish wid her. Dig the rest of the list, b'ys," he called to his gang, "I'll be wid yez at the shed."

"Miss Davenant is wanted at the office," he said guilelessly as he took the post of cicerone.

Twenty minutes later the two returned to the office. Miss Ross, besides her handbag and notebook, clasped a few fringed gentians whose roots were dangling helplessly.

"I wanted these," she said. "I'm giving the class Bryant's 'Fringed Gentian,' and you know that, if possible, the class should be shown a flower. You should have a daffodil if you do Wordsworth's 'Daffodils.' These seem scarce."

"There are very few here now," said Roberta slowly. "Those were down at the end of the lower plantation?"

"Yis," said Michael.

"I hope you tell the children that the flower's a biennial and that they must leave some always for seed, or it will be exterminated!

"Michael! How could you let her!" said Roberta reproachfully, when the nature student had gone.

"Let her what?"

"Pull up the last gentians!"

"Sure I thought she was a fri'nd of yours. She wanted to find some. They're wild, ye know. She pulled up none of the nurs'ry stock, though she did spile one rhodydendron wid breakin' av a branch. They've very little sinse, have teachers. She called a retinospora a juniper just afther I had showed her the juniper.

"'How do you tell the differ?' says she.

"'Make cuttin's f'r an hour,' says I. 'Ye get yer fingers well pricked, an' 'tis a juniper; ye don't, an' 'tis a retinospora. 'Tis a foine botanical distinction.'"

"I'm sorry about the gentians," repeated the girl regretfully.

"Sure," said Michael, "an' there's things ye should be sorrier about, Miss Davenant, than thim! Mr. Herford was here Chuseday, just as you were off f'r the farm wid the long lad. Niver a plant did he buy. He just came out to the greenhouse an' set down by me. 'Michael,' says he, 'there's an old sayin', "Youth flies to Youth."' Niver a tree did he buy; niver a wor-rd did he say about the foine place up the Hudson he's afther buyin' that ye'r to fix up as ye like—niver a wor-rd! What have ye done to my little man?" he demanded severely.

Roberta laughed. "Maybe he prefers spring planting."

Michael shook his head. "Transplantin'," he said; "that's all he cares about, an' whether the sile an' situation he has is suitable. "'Youth flies to youth, Michael,'" says he, lookin' as cheerful as a tinder hydrangea whin the frost has struck it.

"'Sure an' it may,' says I, 'f'r a bit av cavoortin' like a kite in the breeze, but whin it

comes to settlin' down in life, Miss Davenant has sinse enough to choose a good sile an' situation an' not thrust to luck wid a contractor's leavin's.'"

"I didn't know you dealt in parables, Michael."

"Sure, an' I'll deal on annything that'll sind me little man home happy."

"So our young friend Fielding is returning to Carolina," said Mr. Worthington to Roberta a few mornings later.

"So he told me," she answered.

"Ah! He came in the other evening to pay his respects. Quite an interesting lad. He purposes trying camellia growing on his estate; it will be a valuable experiment."

"Very."

"The first horticultural experiments were in South Carolina, the first horticultural society. Laurens, Franklin's fellow ambassador to France, had a fine botanic garden at Charleston, but the horticultural interest seems rather to have lapsed. I am rejoiced to see it reviving. So much could be done there—so much!" said the

old gentleman, who could always see horticultural visions. "They should make hedges of Camellia japonica and of azalea, and yet I hear they are using the Norway maple as a street tree and replacing with it their own Pride of India, a magnificent thing, and the live-oak, a tree of lordly habit. It is the landscape men," said the old gentleman impatiently. "They have no knowledge of the sylva and flora of a given region, only a few recipes which must serve for all parts of the country. An Arabian gardener of the eleventh or twelfth century would, if given our problems, work out a more interesting and less hackneyed conclusion! I am indeed glad to see a youth, who must understand his own conditions and climate, go elsewhere for study, and then return to work out his local problems. It is encouraging.

"The old practise of education by travel had much to commend it, especially where horticulture and gardening are concerned. I should advise it also for our city officials, so that they would not regard methods of proved value in Paris or Berlin, or Vladivostock as dangerous experiments. A man should travel early in his youth,

before his opinions become hardened. I am glad that Colonel Fielding keeps to the old idea and insists that his son travel before settling down. But he should send him to Italy, to France. *You* should travel, Roberta. There's nothing so valuable as what one gets through the eye! Not the printed page, but the vision —the vision!" With that the old gentleman went into his private office.

"Is it thrue?" asked Michael, when he met Roberta in the long packing shed the morning after Fielding's departure.

"Is what true?"

"Is it thrue that the long lad has had the sinse to go back to his native swamps?"

"Mr. Fielding has gone back to South Carolina."

"'Tis well," said Michael with satisfaction. "'Tis the place—is swamps, f'r the long-legged kind, an' no place at Roseb'ry Gardens f'r lads that buy no plants at all at all. If he was thrainin' f'r to be a wor-rkin' gardener—that's one thing. He'd larn to buy fr'm the right place; but to larn to grow somethin' to sell to us—I've no use f'r him, nor the like of him!"

Roberta laughed. "Can't you ever think of trees except to sell them, Michael?"

"Miss Davenant," he said soberly, "it's—it's *pie* to me. I don't know what I'd do in Hiven if I couldn't sell trees!"

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

ROBERTA had not realized how much of colour and life Paul Fielding would take with him from Roseberry Gardens. In the spring, during the riot of colour, the weight of the prevailing elderly or middle-aged personnel of the place was unnoticed; but in the autumn, now that quietness was settling down on the gardens, she missed the dull clatter of his horse's hoofs on the earth road and his joyous greeting through the window, and the invigorating effect of the young fellow's gladsome presence.

She herself had delighted Roseberry Gardens by her warmth, colour, and eagerness, and was now the only young life there. Roseberry Gardens with its elderly workmen and silver-haired directors had seemed out of the world, full of a quiet, dreamy, potent charm of its own. Roberta's part had been that of Miranda to Prospero, while Paul had intruded as a possible

Ferdinand. Or she felt as Ulysses might have felt, if some carrier pigeon had brought a Grecian newspaper to Calypso's isle, and then, after introducing a disturbing element, had flown away. Perhaps the truth was, that, like most New England young folk, the girl needed a little play.

But Paul was right about Miss Adelaide. Roberta found her constantly engrossed in time tables or pamphlets and the question of whether the rail or steamer route would be the more interesting. The two other aunts—Miss Marcia and Miss Elizabeth—were fainter, less positive echoes of Miss Adelaide.

"Neither Marcia nor Elizabeth would think of travelling," said she.

"And are you, Aunt Adelaide?" asked Roberta.

"I have a very courteous letter from Colonel Fielding speaking of our great kindness to his son, and wishing that he might be honoured by our presence there at Christmas. He believes that we are related through the Dalrymples. It might be very interesting, very beneficial, and both Colonel Fielding and his son seem so

anxious for it that I dislike to disappoint them!" Miss Adelaide, like a true New Englander, gave every other excuse than her own preference.

Roberta smiled. "You wouldn't dislike going?"

"No, oh, no," said her aunt hastily. "On the contrary it might be most interesting, but both Marcia and Elizabeth refuse to go; they say it is too far."

"You would like me to go with you?" asked Roberta, who had something of the business-man's liking for plain facts.

"Well, my dear, you are becoming so used to affairs, to shipments, railroads, and the like, that I should feel quite safe with you."

"I'll do what you wish, Aunt Adelaide," said Roberta who also was New Englander enough to feel it necessary to dress a pleasure in the sheep's clothing of a duty in order that it might stand at the right hand.

"But there's no need whatever of deciding at once, except that I must answer Major Fielding's letter. A very charming letter," she remarked, taking it up and holding it carefully as she left the room. "I shall use my

gilt-edged paper to answer it and the Davenant seal."

The young secretary might have been seen the next day coming home a bit early. She walked rapidly down the path beside the plantations and more slowly down the elm-fringed street. At the Davenant house she closed the gate softly, went up the narrow cobblestone path, opened the door quietly—it was never locked, for nobody locked doors in Meadowport—and stepped into the dusk of the wide, dim hall.

For a reason she could not explain, she closed the door softly, went softly through the wide hall which ran straight through the house, and out of the door on the other side where a broad grassy terrace overlooked the river.

Davenant House had always reminded Roberta of her aunts and her aunts of the house. She never was quite sure whether it had taken its colour and atmosphere from them, or they from it. There was the same handsome but rather grimly forbidding aspect of the street-side, the conventional side. Heavily shaded was the house by two great maples set too

close; out past the somewhat cloistral dimness of the hall was the pleasantness of the broad terrace open to the morning sun, friendly and uninviting to a degree wholly unsuspected by those who only knew the house from the street. The garden was like Roberta—utterly unrelated and apart.

The terrace, twenty feet wide and running the whole length of the house, was more Southern than New England in character. It was defined by a low box hedge and a broad, flagged path ran down the centre. At one end were huge lilac bushes, at the other house corner a grapevine sent one branch around for decoration, while the other did its proper duty as arbour by the kitchen door. The terrace was one of the many traces Roberta's mother had left. Before her coming the rear of the house had been completely ungraced—only a slope of uncared-for grass cut by a straggling foot-path. She had won the terrace, not by insistence of a right, but, as she usually won things, by coaxing.

"Anything you like," Robert Davenant had said. "Turn the old house upside down. I

dare say it will like it. But do it without upsetting Adelaide; she's a dear old thing and hates changes."

Margery had laughed. "I'm the most radical change she could possibly have—and she doesn't hate me, Robert! A terrace is mild beside me; she won't mind; she'll let me cut the southeast window down to a French one so you can almost let the roses in to breakfast with us! You New Englanders keep flowers at such a distance!"

"There'll be hardly any difference at all, Adelaide," she had urged. "Only two steps down instead of a slope—and you'll like it, truly! And when the little fellow comes"—she had been sure her baby was to be a boy—"he will trot up and down under your window and look up at you and laugh, and you will say, 'Robin, don't step off the flagging until the grass is dry!' just as you say to me. But I'm terribly afraid if there's some bright coloured flower over by the hedge he will toddle over after it in spite of that!" Mrs. Robert Davenant had had a vivid and pictorial imagination.

So the traditional downstairs bedroom had

been changed into a sunny little breakfast-room and on warm June mornings the roses over the French window almost did come in for breakfast, while under the windows were poet's narcissus and tulips and, later, tall hollyhocks which looked in sociably at the windows.

"I shall teach the little fellow to say 'good morning' to that very friendly hollyhock, Robert"—a great rose-coloured one that crooked its stalk to look in. "You've no idea on what very intimate terms flowers will be with you if you let them!"

She would make her husband choose a rose to take with him to his dingy, musty Main Street office, by way of talisman. "It's better than a rabbit's foot," she would say.

She would have a small table moved out on the terrace and breakfast there beside her husband with the elderly lilacs and the friendly roses for observers, or coax a socially inclined squirrel until he would almost come to her chair for bits.

Such things were unheard of in Meadowport, and would have worried it sorely, but Meadowport, fortunately, could not look through the

old house to the sunny terrace nor around the corner of the lilac bushes. It had all charmed Robert Davenant. Like most New Englanders he had no idea how much poetry and charm could be put into the so-called common things and felt as if, in his House of Life, he had been living all these years with shades drawn and shutters closed, with no knowledge of the sunshine and flowers outside until this sudden opening to their radiance.

But the sunshine had gone from the terrace when Roberta stepped out on it that afternoon —it only touched the tops of the lilac bushes. "Margery's Terrace," her aunts always called it, and the girl often thought that it was a lovely thing to have left through all these years so definite an impress of a blithe personality. Roberta had never known her mother, but for the first time she felt a bit lonely without her. The aunts, kind as they were, seemed as apart from life, from vivid, active, joyous, pulsating life, as if they were pictures on the wall. Her mother, dead these nineteen years, seemed more vital.

The girl walked with her quick, sure, noise-

less step along the smooth-clipped grass, down the broad steps by the lilac bushes, across the lawn shaded by great elms, opened the white-painted gate and passed into the garden, down the long centre path between the rows of ardent marigolds to the little latticed summerhouse at its foot. She sat down and looked across the garden—dwarf fruit trees framed it on the side toward Major Pomerane's place. Toward the orchard was a long, low grape-arbour, where now the vines were hung with heavy, ripening clusters. The garden itself lay all gold and purple in the late September sunshine, rows of sunny marigolds, late larkspur sending up a secondary bloom and already seeding, while tall, straggling Michaelmas daisies showed royal purple there by the dwarf apples which showed crimson through their foliage.

But Roberta was not thinking of the garden. Her mind was off and away at Paradise Park, and over and over in her head she was turning the question—to go, or not. Much of the prospect fascinated and called her, yet she knew perfectly, with that inside knowledge women have, that once there Paul Fielding would speak

more definitely. Did she wish him to? That was the question. If she did not, ought she to go?

A swallow flew in and out again of the little arbour, on seeing the intruder. Her eyes rested on the opposite bench; an inch-worm was slowly and unconcernedly measuring his way across, looking neither to the right nor to the left. "That's the way I ought to work I suppose." Presently in flew a swallow and snapped up this conscientious insect. The girl pushed back her hair with an impatient gesture—why need one look across and beyond, and around the corner? "It's not my fault if I have a notion of what may happen," she said to herself.

There was a quick tap, tap, of a cane on the gravel, the click of a latch, and the Major entered through the little private gate that had always been between the two gardens.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed, "it's the lady of Roseberry Gardens! Michael here was sniffing as if there were some extraordinary interest.

"'What makes you come so soon?
You used to come at six o'clock
And now in the afternoon!'"

The Major quoted cheerfully, altering the childish lines to suit his whim. His taste in verse was young enough to have pleased the smallest auditor.

"I thought you never quit until the last workman was gone, the last gun fired. But Michael was sure there was something interesting across the fence."

"I'm taking an afternoon off, Major," said Roberta.

"Turning your back on Duty, eh?"

She nodded.

"Good thing!" he said. "Serious vice—overindustry. Never had it myself, but I've observed. Insidious, mischievous, undermines the health, ruins the capacity for enjoyment. Very prevalent in New England. I was afraid you had contracted it, my child! I've been getting alarmed. There's lots of it round. 'Stern Daughter of the gods' is all right for Duty—she is that; but she isn't the only daughter of the gods. She should take her turn and keep her place. That's it, Duty should be kept in her place. Joy of Life is a daughter of the gods also."

Roberta laughed. "Don't you believe in the industrious Franklin, Poor Richard, and all that sort of thing, and in going to the ant, Major Pomerane?"

"Not a bit of it!" said the Major sturdily. "Franklin did what suited him. If he kept his nose to the grindstone, it was because he liked it there. As to the ant—what does she do anyway but dig and burrow and make her pile, like a fool millionaire? I'd rather have bobolinks and blackbirds round my garden any day than ants. They're more decorative, pleasanter company, and just as useful. There's plenty of people that I believe would stop the bobolink's music and set 'em scratching the ground like hens in the name of industry and utility and swap their music for a cackle.

"Don't you let any one cheat you out of the joyousness of life, my child! It's your right! If something would make you happy, take it; if it wouldn't make you happy, refuse it! There are more lives spoiled by a mistaken sense of Duty than by badness!"

"What a dangerous philosophy, Major," said Roberta. "So you don't believe in training,

in pruning, and in all the rest that horticulturists swear by?"

"In reason, in reason, but you garden-daft people see to it that a plant has the soil it likes. You don't put a sun-loving thing in the shade and a shade-loving thing in the sun. People are forever doing that with their children. Young folks need sunshine and laughter and gaiety, and they ought to have them! Don't you get embedded in the soil at Roseberry Gardens and glued to a notebook like the old fossils, when the Lord sends such mornings as he has the last week, and Nancy is just eating her head off in the stable, growing bad-tempered for lack of a gallop! Your father was a fossil, but your mother wasn't. I'm growing alarmed about you, Roberta! Are you going to take all that love of flowers and gardens that your mother had and screw it into Bob Davenant's legal dry-kiln method? He only used it on cases anyway. He grew to have a real feeling for plants. But your mother—she loved them like a hummingbird. I don't wonder Paul went home disgusted."

"Disgusted with what?" asked Roberta.

"Roseberry Gardens, I reckon," said the old

gentleman, rising a bit stiffly. "I know he went off mighty sudden. Perhaps it was the other way round. Maybe he was afraid if he stayed a bit longer he'd get the germ—the same thing all the old fossils there have—and couldn't leave it for the life of him. So he put wax in his ears, shut his eyes, and just ran—fled temptation."

Roberta flushed a little. Her old friend looked at her curiously.

"'So sits the wind in that quarter,'" he said.

"What quarter, Major?"

"Southwest," he said, looking off at the sky; "it's going to be a pretty morning again to-morrow. What shall I tell Nancy when I give her her oats to-night?"

"Tell her I'll go with pleasure," said Roberta.

"Good child! And don't you bother your head about that young idiot cousin of mine—a few bumps won't hurt him. Needs 'em—make his brains grow."

Roberta and the Major rode out through the misty morning, first along the meadows where the red-winged blackbirds had sung all summer; then by a steep horseshoe curve up the river bluff, past a group of ugly little houses that

clustered about a railroad track, drawn apparently by its ugliness to the level beauty of the elm-fringed street; then straight back to the hills past the dingy, uncomfortable little houses that had set themselves between the quiet serenity of the street, with its square, old-fashioned houses, and the hill country.

"Let's go fast past these. They aren't pretty," said Roberta. Soon the road began to climb and presently grew narrower and the copper and gold leaves underfoot were less trodden. The October mists hung heavily, and the foliage was damp and gleaming in the sunlight that made its way through the reluctant fog. The rocks were wet, and along them, now on a stone wall, now on a fence rail, flashed a chipmunk.

Slowly the mist rose, disentangling itself from the trees.

The Major and Michael kept an eye out for the grouse. Now and then Michael had succeeded in flushing one and had come back in pride and disgust that no one would take advantage of it.

"No use, boy," Major Pomerane had said. "She's turned gardener—she's no use for a gun

—pretty soon she'll have none for you or me or Nancy!"

Roberta looked for a moment over the valley and the town, then off toward the gardens.

"I must go back," she said, "but it's lovely," and she leaned over to pat Nancy Lee's gleaming neck.

"Aunt Adelaide," she said when she came home from her work that evening, "I'll take you South if you like."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

PAUL'S father, Carlton Fielding, was land poor. Paradise Park stretched back acres and acres from the Cooper River. It had belonged to the Fieldings since the original grant more than two hundred years back, from the Lords of the Province. In Revolutionary days it had been a notable place with splendid gardens, magnificently laid out. Of these there was little left, but the stately avenue of giant liveoaks bowed with moss was more beautiful than ever, and the curve of the river was subtle and lovely at Paradise Park—as if river and gardens were completely in sympathy, and had long loved each other, and lived together in perfect accord. Now the beautiful old place was heavily burdened, its acres hopelessly mortgaged. Resources, which would have been ample, were maddeningly unavailable for lack of capital. The worry of it, the years of debt-burdened anxiety, had turned Colonel Fielding's

hair, once a shock as yellow as Paul's, perfectly white at forty. Paul, in fact, could not remember his father otherwise than with white hair.

At Paul's age—four years younger, in fact, at twenty-two—Colonel Carlton Fielding had faced the difficult problem which most men of the South in 1865 met with splendid courage.

To fight bravely is one thing; there is a certain glamour and a historic fascination about it which have a tremendous appeal to a young man's imagination. There is also the contagion of enthusiasm; but to face the results of war with bravery and endurance requires courage of a far higher order. There is no glamour about poverty; no martial music to aid in setting one's face to the slow work of repairing heart-breaking devastation; no charm nor fascination in taking up one's life again with crippled resources.

"Why not sell the place?" practical relatives and friends advised him repeatedly. But Carlton Fielding loved it. He would almost as soon have thought of selling his son.

We Americans are growing to be a nomadic people, especially those of us who live in cities

and shift cheerfully and easily from apartment to apartment, from hotel to hotel, with no conception of how a man may love his home acres —the trees and bushes, even the doorstep. It was not for nothing that Moses desired the Israelites to rest "every man under his own vine and fig tree," rather than in his own tent or house.

Affections cannot easily hang on brick and mortar, still less on hired brick and mortar; they need something more responsive. The great oaks, the wide lawn spaces where the waving shadows of the moss-draped trees lay heavily, the tangles of Cherokee roses which made the edge of a swamp as full of mystery as an enchanted land, had been woven into Carlton Fielding's life from his earliest childhood.

To keep the place had been a long fight. Even now a Northern millionaire was anxious to buy it outright and entire. Some of the woodland had gone—the pine woods. That was the year Paul was born. And year after year, as the trees were removed, skidded, damaging the rest of the forest sorely, Colonel Fielding felt as if he had betrayed his friends.

There was phosphate, too, but to mine that would have involved the loss of the great oak trees.

So Fielding had chosen foolishly, practical people thought, had kept the inheritance essentially intact, selling off only the less intrinsic part, and had worked steadily and persistently at restoring the rice plantation, rebuilding the dykes, which kept out the slightly salt river-water, and with exceeding difficulty and scant equipment was growing rice of steadily increasing quality.

The gardens he had of necessity left more or less to their fate, which was far kinder to them than if they had been remodelled. The magnificent lines of the lordly old place remained unchanged. Four huge camellias marked the corners of the one time rose-garden. The walks and boundaries, the box hedges, were the same as in his grandfather's time; and here and there, at exactly the right points, was planted the Virginia cedar, where in Italy a red cedar would have been set. There were walks hedged by magnolias that made a wall of green as close and dark as an ilex hedge as they leaned together far overhead to arch it. But where had been

parterre and flowery border was grassy space, and from it tons of hay were cut. Over the elaborate terraces that descended to the river, cows were grazing, kept from the gardens by a beautiful wrought-iron gate.

Much as he loved Paradise Park, Carlton Fielding had been unwilling that Paul should take the burden of it on his shoulders—in any case, not until he had had a look at other things. So he sent him North, not to Harvard, for Paradise Park could not afford that, but to one of the smaller colleges tucked securely away in the New England hills.

When Paul made up his mind to come back to the old place, Carlton Fielding was radiantly happy.

"Yo' sho' look ten years younger, Marse Carl," said old Calliope the morning after Paul's return.

For it was a new Paul that had come back—a Paul no longer listless, but eager and interested in every detail of his father's work, alive to every point in the rice-growing, a Paul who, at seven in the morning, was afield with the men—a Paul on whose bookshelves, beside De Mau-

passant and Stevenson and Balzac, stood books of agriculture and pile upon pile of Government Bulletins.

"When there's a new zest for work, or a new interest in apparel," said Colonel Fielding to himself as he surveyed Paul's room, "its '*cherchez la femme*,' as sure as in a crime!"

When Paul asked his father to invite Miss Davenant and Roberta down for Christmas, Carlton Fielding smiled. "So *that's* the girl," he said to himself. "Thank the Lord she's sent him back to Paradise and rice-growing. It might have been trailing over Europe or business up North.

"Surely," he said to his son, "ask 'em all down, Paul!"

Then he wanted a description. "Tell me what she's like, Paul!"

"Oh, wait and see," said Paul evasively.

"I'm afraid of those Northern girls. They're so confoundedly brisk and businesslike. I don't mind a woman being clever—though I'd rather she'd be sweet, that's really cleverer—but those Northern girls are what the Yankees call 'smart'—and I don't like it."

"She isn't 'smart,' Dad," said Paul reassuringly, "but she's bright enough to care to see Paradise Park. I reckon it's the oaks and camellias she's coming to see, rather than me and you!"

Carlton Fielding looked affectionately at the young fellow's clear, strong profile, and laughed gently.

"Oaks and camellias are a right good excuse, Paul. In my day it was to see the roses or to try a horse. By all means let her come and see them. The camellias will be pleased, and so will I. But can she ride?" he ended, anxiously.

"She's the only girl I met up North who could, Dad. I'd trust her with anything on four legs."

Carlton Fielding drew a sigh of relief. "If she can ride and shooed you back to rice-growing," he said, "she's not a fool or a molly-coddle."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

"MISS DAVENANT," said Michael one morning, "have ye there no order f'r Mr. Maurice J. Herford? I think there's a small wan that sh'u'd go this month. 'Tis now the twintieth."

For October had passed without Mr. Herford, and November bade fair to do the same. Still no slender, gray-clad figure stepped out at the office door. "'Tis a shame," said Michael, to himself, "if he does not know that the land's been cleared an' the weeds t'run over the fence."

The secretary spent a few moments in research with the order-book.

"There are a few evergreens down—look like small ones for window-boxes. I can't find any instructions."

"They sh'u'd go at once," said Michael decisively, "an' I have a decoration—a pot for the table, made up mesilf, that I'm after sindin' him f'r Thanksgivin'—that can go along as

sort av bokay. Put it down on the bill, 'one plant—gratis.' That means 'tis a prisint."

"Very well," said Roberta.

"I wonder will he understand?" said Michael to himself as he worked happily over his offering at his potting bench at the end of the long greenhouse. He had before him a wide-mouthed bulb-pan, perhaps six inches deep, and in the centre of his creation was a foot-high slender Southern pine, with a tuft of green at the top.

"That's f'r the long lad," he remarked. "I'll label it to be sure." And he scrawled in his cramped hand on the small wooden label, "P. Fieldingii S. Caroliniensis." "P. stands f'r Paul as well as f'r Pinus. In the language of plants an' av larnin'," he said, "that means that long lad is pulled up fr'm Roseb'ry Gardens an' sint where he belongs!"

Closely about the centre piece Michael set young ardisias, gay with scarlet berries. "These are f'r cheerfulness—to show we're well contint without him." He filled in the space about the edge with tiny box plants. "These are for——" He stopped. "I don't well know mesilf. Mr. Herford will think it out. Belike they stand

f'r Roseb'ry Gardens that's goin' on just the same!"

Michael surveyed his handiwork with pride for a few moments. Then he sought the teamster.

"Washington," said he, "ye're to leave this box at Mr. Herford's house in town, an' ye're not to tell me it's out of the way, f'r it's right on it if ye go a mile or so around! Ye'r name is jist Washington, is it not? And not Gear-rge?"

"That's right, boss," said Washington grinning.

"'Tis well. Ye sh'u'd say that the box is wid Miss Davenant's compliments. D'ye mind that!"

"Wid Miss Davenant's compliments, yassir," repeated Washington.

"That's right. Now off with you!"

"You are shipping to Mr. Herford, Michael?" asked Mr. Worthington, as Michael passed his door.

"Just a few little evergreens," said Michael. "He's not plantin' as he sh'u'd this fall."

"People will not plant in the autumn!" said Mr. Worthington impatiently.

"Now is the time they should be making rose-

gardens," continued the old gentleman, "now when it can be done properly. Yet they will not. They will try to do it in June when the roses are in bloom."

Trommel grunted impatiently. "Autumn planting iss foresight, und foresight belongs to good gardening. America iss not a people of gardens. A good garden belongs to leisure und contemplation. Und where is leisure and contemplation with a people that rush for trains und hang by a strap in the street cars?

He sat on the edge of a chair in Mr. Worthington's private office with his workman's apron on and a bunch of raffia tucked in the string about his portly waist.

"They must set rose-gardens in bloom, und plant fruit trees in fruit, und gardens while you wait. The symbolic plant of America is Chonah's Gourd. Quick it goes up, und quick it goes down."

Mr. Worthington laughed. "The passion for immediate effect is older than America, Trommel:

> "'In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
> A stately, pleasure dome decree',"

declaimed the old gentleman. "Decree, you observe, Trommel—there is the idea of immediateness."

"If one could believe the minister of that church where I wass choined (und where, thank Gott! I am choined no more), the wish for immediateness iss from the creation, und the Almighty himself has set the pernicious example. 'Let there be light und there wass light! Let the earth bring forth herb und so forth, und it wass so.' Und the efil of that immediateness, the perniciousness of that teaching iss that people who hear that minister will haf a garden like that. They know nothing of the slow preparation und development. Let there be a garden und it wass a garden!"

"Yes, yes," assented Mr. Worthington hastily, "but there is the demand and to a certain extent we must meet it. The Arabian idea of the twelfth century setting hollow posts and planting roses in the tops, thus getting the effect of an enormous rose-tree the first season, was nothing else than an attempt to meet the demand for immediate effect! I have thought of doing something of the kind at Roseberry Gardens.

How are the magnolias, Michael—those in baskets—can you move them better?"

"Ye can move them like a sound asleep baby. They niver know they're out of the nurs'ry until they wake up in another place."

"They will be a boon to the folks who cannot wait."

"It iss a wrong demand," asserted Trommel, "und a wrong demand should not be met."

The old gentleman smiled tolerantly.

"It is the demand of ignorance," reiterated Trommel.

"Sure, Mr. Trommel," said Michael gayly, "if every one knew as much as you and me and Mr. Worthington, where would be Roseb'ry Gardens? Then every one would know enough to grow their own; they'd grow their own roses, an' if they had patience enough they'd grow their own trees. Don't ask f'r intelligence; ask only f'r the price to pay an' the sinse to come here an' buy."

"Michael, you are incorrigible!" said Horace Worthington."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

"WHATEVER has become av my little man?" Michael would say to himself as one hack after another drove up to the dingy little office.

This was Monday.

Tuesday came, and no Maurice Herford.

Then came a day of rain, a fine, misty November rain that refreshed the evergreens, made them glisten, and brought out those delicate odours of leaf, stem, and turf that the sun dispels. In the faint mist and rain the broad grass paths, overhung by dripping, gleaming branches, made the place look more than ever like an English garden.

Most of the workmen were indoors at work or had stayed at home. Trommel, however, careless of rheumatism (like the elderly Troll he was), went about between the rows of plants, stooping to cut here and there. He was getting grafts from the rhododendrons.

For Roberta, a rainy day was always a day of liberty. There would be few visitors, for one thing. It is a bold and constant plant-lover who will choose a rainy day for garden reconnoitring. Passionate garden-lovers are usually middle-aged at least, and middle-age thinks of rubbers and rheumatism and other prosaic things, even when the love for the garden is passionate. For this reason, perhaps, Mr. Worthington would not be out. He would stay by his fire and read Evelyn or Repton. Meanwhile his secretary could do as she chose. What she chose was usually a happy and umbrellaless tour of the gardens.

Not that Mr. Worthington would have objected to such use of time—there was quite enough overtime work done in rush hours to compensate—but he would have been genuinely distressed at the exposure, as he would have called it, and would have predicted bronchitis and kindred ills. Intellectually, Horace Worthington was modern, even in his attitude toward women, but by temperament and tradition he could not help considering them hothouse plants, after the manner of the last century, beings to

be shielded theoretically from all ills, practically from such lesser ones as inclement weather.

Roberta walked rapidly down to the End Entirely, then along the path at the edge of the woods—young oak on one hand and the dogwood plantation on the other.

Her soft hat shed the rain like a sou'wester, and the low branches brushed her coat. She was very happy.

The scarlet fruit on the barberries was redder than ever, gleaming from the wet, and the red hips on the rugosa roses shone vividly against the dark stiff brown branches. The sea-buckthorn was gorgeous in orange; the blue of the spruce bluer than ever in the dampness. People who know shrubs in their brief season of blossoming, and trees only in the summer, have as vague and imperfect an acquaintance with them as some good folk have with children when their knowledge is limited to the appearance of the youngsters in a Sunday-school class. Plants are different, more vital, more themselves when not on parade.

In the very early morning, or at nightfall, or in a rain, the woods have a life of their own.

It is then that their real lovers like to be among them, then if ever one can forget civilization and go back to a happy paganism. If you like you may come and look on, but they are quite indifferent whether you go or stay—they have far more important concerns than humankind!

Roseberry Gardens in winter offered such attractions that bird tenants came from miles around. "Here were acres and acres," they told each other, "where were houses in which people had no cats, and no guns; here were close deep hedges of hemlock that kept out the snow and made a house as dry and warm as a woodpecker's; here were big rhododendrons whose leathery leaves made the stoutest sort of canopy. One could nest in the biggest and finest. And then the table!" Not here and there a single little bush, but rows on rows of the choicest berries—a veritable market-display—white pointed mulberries which any bird would travel twenty miles to taste; berries from every clime and country: Russia, Japan, China; berries from the Himalayas and the Amoor River; viburnums and elderberries, lonicera, callicarpa, every sort of barberry—the small ivory berries

of the white pointed dogwood—these were the most delicious fare; Japanese apples, no bigger than the hips of rugosa roses and really excellent eating when the choicest fruits were gone. There was always plenty at Roseberry Gardens! "Besides," said the birds, "there is a queer old fellow with a thick bushy beard who puts suet for us outside the doors of those long funny white houses, where if you look in through the top you'd think you were in the tropics, except that they do not let one in!"

What wonder that year after year the birds were there. Here might one see the rose-breasted grosbeak, pale gray underneath, with a shield like a brilliant rose petal laid on his breast, a cousin to the Southern cardinal. Here the scarlet tanager lingers a little on his way south, and the robins delay their going. Here the blue-jay scolds and orders the other feathered folk about, while snowbirds, nuthatches and all other small courageous little fellows, unafraid of Boreas, find in Roseberry Gardens a veritable Paradise.

Therefore, on a rainy day in November, within the hemlock hedge was no small amount

of cheeping and twittering. The tenants were selecting their winter quarters, and choosing their perches, discussing the matter at great length. The tiniest bird can have as definite an opinion as a turkey buzzard and hold it more tenaciously, while a humming-bird can be as angry as a great horned owl.

In the hemlock hedge were chickadees, evidently considering it for winter quarters, who had come around to see how their roof acted in a rain.

Roberta, as she walked along, stopped again and again, peeping into the hedge to see who might be there.

She stopped to listen to a yellow-hammer high up in one of the oaks. His was an apartment that could defy any sort of weather as well as that of the squirrel who lived below.

The rain brought the fresh colour into the girl's face, made her hair curl in little tendrils around her forehead, and the light made it redder than ever.

At last she went back to the buildings, left her dripping coat and hat in the furnace-room in the last of the greenhouses, and, turning into the dim packing shed, met Michael.

"Could ye do somethin' f'r me?" he asked. "Ye'll not be afther workin' in the office to-day?"

"Sure and I could, Michael. Do you want some orders taken out, and will some of the men dig in the rain?"

"'Tis not that," said Michael; "but will ye pot up some seedlings f'r me? I want the benches in the second house clear f'r some new cuttings."

"Indeed, I'd love to, Michael; lead me to them!"

They went together to his potting bench and Michael brought her some "flats"—shallow, square wooden boxes full of tiny seedlings, a goodly supply of "thumb" pots. She was to be undisturbed in his corner of the greenhouse—mistress of the wide potting bench with its pile of soft, rich, velvety soil, delicious to the fingers.

Michael ran his through it almost caressingly, and potted a half dozen of the infant plants with quick skilful fingers. "I wish I c'u'd do it all the afternoon!" he said, "but I've other work. I thank you indeed, Miss Davenant."

Roberta worked rapidly and deftly, and soon

had flat after flat filled with the tiny pots each with its small tenant upright, exactly in the centre.

She had been working about twenty minutes when she heard Michael's voice in the adjoining greenhouse: "I think ye may find her down by me pottin' bench, Mr. Herford; she might be there," he said doubtfully.

Roberta smiled. One could not help being amused at Michael, even if he—— She lifted one hand from the fresh brown mould, looked for a clean spot on the back of it, and with that pushed her hair back from her eyes, as she turned to greet Mr. Herford.

Evidently Maurice Herford knew the ways of Roseberry Gardens and the worth of a rainy day.

He had orchids with him, rarely beautiful ones, growing in their small wooden cages.

"I thought these would interest you," he said, his grave dark eyes lighting as he saw the quick pleasure in the girl's face.

Maurice Herford knew how to give one things that one wanted, she thought.

"Just a minute!" said Roberta. She went

to the great tub where the pots were soaking, dipped her earth-stained hands therein, and turned on the faucet over them, pulled a handkerchief from her pocket and rubbed them dry.

Maurice Herford glanced at them critically. They were slim and brown, but muscular.

"Now let me take it!" she said, and lifting the small square wooden box in her hand she touched the exquisite petals delicately with the tip of her finger.

"How very lovely! I am so glad you brought it this way! We'll take the best of care of them."

Maurice Herford was curiously happy at Roseberry Gardens. He felt as one does in fairy tales when he drops into Elfland or some other wonderful clime and is diminished suddenly to the height of a three-inch flower-pot with a privet cutting for truncheon; is able to swing on lily-bells; or one finds one's self riding a winged horse, or floating over the tree-tops with the ease of a ball of dandelion fluff—perfectly at home, perfectly happy, only a trifle surprised—that's all!

Herford felt himself quite another person—

in fact, he was. The Maurice Herford that Michael knew was one that none of his business associates and few of his friends in the outer world would have recognized.

He looked at the rooted cuttings and the array of little pots. "I can do that," he said. So he hung his hat beside Michael's battered felt, took Michael's gardening apron down from its peg (for that was part of the transformation), and was presently at work, setting each small plant in its pot, pressing the earth about it with fingers almost as deft as Michael's own. His reserve was gone, and he chatted with a happy, boyish gayety that seemed to belong to the blue denim apron and with having his hat hung beside Michael's on the peg.

He told Roberta of the greenhouse he was building, of the winter garden he had planned which would be a terrace in summer and enclosed with glass in winter. He smoothed a miniature terrace in the pile of soil beside him and set in the tiny plants to show where the azaleas should go. There would be camellias and other half-hardy plants—not in pots, but set in the ground. The glass in winter would

give just enough protection. On mild days everything would be open and the plants would think they were in Italy!

So engrossed was Mr. Herford in his change of occupation that the early dusk of November had fallen before he was aware of it and his carriage was gone.

That was Michael's carelessness. He should have sent the man to the stables to wait.

" 'Tis a shame," he said regretfully, "but Peregrine can drive ye in whin he takes Miss Davenant."

Later he watched them drive off.

"'Tis a pity he's not a bit of Irish in him," he said. "I'm not sayin' 'twould make him betther, but 'twould save him lots of time."

CHAPTER TWENTY

MISS ADELAIDE DAVENANT was concerned about no such trifles as whether folk would plant or would not plant at the proper time, nor with Michael O'Connor's problem of why Mr. Maurice J. Herford had ceased his bi-weekly visits to the Gardens. Her problems were of far more moment and occupied all her waking hours.

Should she turn her black silk and have it made over, or should she buy a new one? Did one need a winter bonnet in the South or should one take only the straw one?

There was no one in Meadowport whom she could ask, none who would know, except Major Pomerane, and it would be impossible to ask him about a detail of one's toilette!

Then, too, Miss Adelaide was concerned as to whether or not she ought to have accepted the invitation. She did not know Colonel Carlton Fielding at all! Paul had made himself so com-



pletely at home in her house, had seemed so like a nephew of her own, whom she might have known from babyhood, that she had forgotten how brief was the actual acquaintance. But his mother had been a Dalrymple; that was reassuring, and Cononel Fielding's sister Clarissa (from whom Miss Davenant had also received word) had been a friend of Roberta's mother.

In fact, the trouble with the good lady was that her spontaneous acceptance was out of her usual character and, now that she was committed, the rest of her nature protested. The eagerness of age had led her astray.

People speak of the eagerness of youth, but the eagerness of youth is nothing to the eagerness of age—a secluded and uneventful age, which lives over and over past enjoyments, and anticipates, to a degree of which youth knows little, the slightest of coming pleasures. An expedition to the Antarctic would hardly seem to require more thoughtful preparation.

Disturbed in her usual routine, Miss Adelaide began going into the garden far more than had been her wont. Late in the morning, when the slow November sunshine had mellowed

the air a bit, she would go down the long path, a little worsted shoulder cape drawn closely over her shoulders, and busy herself in the borders cutting down the dead stalks of phlox or larkspur.

Roberta was too busy to attend to their own garden properly, she would explain to the Major, who, on the other side of the fence, was busy protecting his roses. The truth was that Miss Adelaide found the Major consoling.

"You'll have the time of your life, Adelaide," said he. "You'll be ready to play marbles with me as you did forty years ago, when you come back. The Fountain of Youth is down that way, you know!"

"Is it so long ago?" said Miss Davenant.

"Fact, my dear lady, but it seems like yesterday. You didn't play so badly."

"I won a reel of yours—a blue one. I have it in my button-bag," said Miss Adelaide complacently.

"Then I'll win it back. I may go down myself. They're dear people. The boy is nice, but I haven't seen Carl Fielding for fifteen years; I sure would like to. Best shot in the

county, and what he doesn't know about horses isn't worth anybody's remembering! He can take the cussedest brute and turn him into a mount for a fidgety woman. You ought to see the old race-track down there! That was in his grandfather's time. Some of the finest hunters in the state have been bred at Paradise Park." The Major grew enthusiastic and forgot his audience. "There was Jim Dandy and Scorpion that won the stakes at Charleston in '79——"

"A medal?" asked Miss Adelaide politely.

"Er—yes—a sort of medal—general excellence, you know. Poor old Paradise! There's been none of that for years. But you'll have a fine time and do them a world of good. Fine thing for the little girl, too. You don't want her to get rooted there in Roseberry Gardens. It is all very well for you and me to be planted in our places, but young things—even those old fossils out there will tell you that—young things should have frequent transplanting. Now with you and me, Adelaide, it's different. Takes quite a bit of root pruning before we are dislodged."

And then, although she had not settled the question of the toilette, Miss Adelaide would go back to the house oddly reassured.

Major Pomerane found it pleasant, those frosty November mornings, to ride through Roseberry Gardens. He would stop and exchange a word with old Rudolph, who had very few words to spare, leave his horse in the stables by Washington's little house, and then go down to the office and warm his fingers at Mr. Worthington's grate fire. He displayed an unusual interest in the Gardens: talked with Horace Worthington on all his pet subjects, till the old gentleman, glad of a sympathetic listener, would grow eloquent.

"If ever we are to have a distinctive gardencraft, Major," he would say, "the keynote of it will be variety. Variety! Not a heterogeneous assemblage of diverse and discordant plants —by no means! But a skilful and exquisite blending. Variety and swiftness! We are not fast enough!"

"What?" The Major looked amused.

"Not fast enough," the old gentleman repeated; "we do not keep pace with Nature.

We have a wonderful spring, and in the gardens exquisite and subtle changes should follow each other with a marvellous celerity. Browning has the idea—rapidity, swiftness:

"Blue ran the flash across
Violets were born.

"Only, the 'bank of moss' need not have been 'starved,'" he added critically; "something might have been in bloom before—crocus, perhaps, or if nothing else there is always Vinca minor. Monotony, sameness—they should never exist in this country. In the summer our gardens should be places of coolness, shade, with a sense of quietness—the 'green thought in the green shade.'"

"I know," said the Major hastily, as if to head off further quoting—"'Rose-grot, fringed pool, and the rest!'"

"Yes, yes," assented Horace Worthington, "and in the autumn a magnificence of colour, rich and wonderfully varied; no country can rival us in this; they should show in the winter comfort, the sense of protection—such as the English garden has—and cheer. A man's fancy should

have free rein; then we should have charming little gardens. But fancy is gone from us! Even the word, in its old, true sense, is unused; it has lost its delicate poetic quality; we have, as it were, 'rung Fancy's knell.'"

"To be sure," agreed the Major, "fancy prices, dry-and-fancy goods, fancy butter have done it. Poets won't use the word any more—have to think up another. Probably if you asked a school child to

"'Tell me, where is Fancy bred?'

he'd point you to the nearest bakery. I can't tell you where it's bred or nourished, but I can tell you where it isn't, and that's in the suburbs. No chance for fancy to run riot in your garden; when, if you breakfast on your porch, your next neighbour knows if you like one egg or two, and if you have muffins or toast for breakfast. Fancy is shy."

"Everything creative is shy," said the old gentleman.

"To be sure! A hen steals her nest and a poet betakes himself to a garret. Same reason."

"Perhaps, but the spirit of adventure is gone from us."

"May be gone from Roseberry Gardens, Horace, but it's not gone from the town. Adelaide has it—Adelaide Davenant; she's going gallivanting for the first time in her life—off to Paradise Park, Fielding's place in South Carolina."

"Ah, indeed! A very interesting place—very wonderful old camellias! They were imported by André Michaux in 1748, and are still growing luxuriantly."

"There, James! There is a hedge plant for the South! Imagine the elegance of a hedge of Camellia japonica! The rich, gleaming, dark green of the foliage; and then in January the brilliant colour! What a setting for a rose garden in an estate of distinction—the richness of it!"

"Yes, yes," said the Major, "to be sure! Fielding wrote me something about them—says he has thousands—wants to make them a bit useful. Think Roberta knows enough to look at them with a hard, practical eye? She might kill two birds with a stone: have an eye on Adelaide and the camellias both."

"Excellent idea!" said the old gentleman warmly. "I'll speak to Trommel about it."

It was easy enough to find old Rudolph; he went on his way serenely indifferent to the bustle of the fall shipping, the piles of trees and shrubs that began to fill the packing shed and more than ever make it feel like Christmas. He made his way around the piles, that was all.

"We need neither clock nor calendar about Roseb'ry Gardens," said Michael, "if you keep your eyes open. Ye can set yer watch anny morning by Peregrine and know 'tis fifteen minutes late, and ye can tell the day av the month by watchin' to see what Trommel's doin'! Ye may be runnin' yer legs off wid gettin' away the Christmas evergreens. Niver a bit does it bother him. The ninth day av December in the mornin' ye'll find him out cutting rhododendrons' grafts. 'Tis all one to him whether we sell much or little, an' 'tis all I can do to keep him fr'm going over the plants in the packing shed, and taking off likely grafts. Ye'd think we were maintainin' a Bureau of Dindrology, ye w'u'd, himself at the head

of it, to prevent annything from leaving the place."

Mr. Worthington found Trommel in the greenhouse bending over his baby rhododendrons. But old Rudolph was non-committal. "I think nothing until I haf tried them," he answered succinctly to Mr. Worthington's question.

"You would be willing to try them?"

"Assuredly. What would I not try once or twice? But pot-grown iss always better if the plant iss to be pot-grown. To be born in civilization iss better for a child if he iss to grow up in civilization. How easy those camellias would adapt themselfs, I do not know. Perhaps a year to grow into stocks, and then the grafting."

"Do you think Miss Davenant could tell a stock?"

"She could tell one that wass straight from one that wass not straight," he admitted; "that iss something. How they would serve as stocks, no one could tell until after they had been grown perhaps three years, und then compared with plants grown on other stock. It iss impor-

tant that they are properly packed und dug. She could direct that."

As the holidays drew near, more and more did the place smell like Christmas. Great loads of scarlet-berried ardisias went to town, and the shed was filled with piles of little evergreens—Japanese conifers, gay in green and gold; junipers tinged with blue or a rusty red, as stiffly upright as soldiers on parade. Instead of being shut up in boxes with only breathing holes for air, these went to the city florists on trucks that looked like transports laden with stout little green soldiers. Michael, in the bustle and rush of the shipping, was radiantly happy.

"I'm glad to see them off," he said to Roberta, looking after a load of the little evergreens. "'Tis for window-boxes they are, and they bring good luck to the house. No evergreens about the house at Michaelmas and there's no place f'r the Little People to hide thimselves and watch th' fun. They'll be round the house, come Christmas, trying to get in. Ye should make thim welcome!"

"You don't mean to say that you believe in fairies, Michael!" exclaimed Roberta.

"An' wherefore not? Am I not Irish, can I not speak the Gaelic, an' am I not from Kerry? Sure, and Mr. Trommel believes in things far more taxing to the head than thim! But they've a har-rd time now about the gardens! People have disbelieved in thim so long they can't do their wor-rk (and I don't wonder at it); that's why we have to use Bordeaux an' all the other ill-smelling, bug-killing mixtures; the Little People have abandoned us to our fate. They only come around a bit come Christmas f'r the sake of old times!"

Roberta laughed. "Where's Mr. Trommel? Whist! Listen!" A stream of forcible German profanity came from the greenhouse.

"Would you listen to that!" exclaimed Michael admiringly. "'Tis the boss admonishing Barney, and niver a wor-rd of it does the lad understand. Wait a bit and ye'll hear him end his malediction with a simple admonition in the King's English, and 'tis all av the scoldin' the lad comprehends!"

Sure enough, after the fierce invective, came, "That iss not quite right, Bernard."

Michael chuckled. "When I hear the boss I wish I had larnin' mesilf, but all I have is botanical names, and they're no use f'r purposes of profanity. But whin I see Barney as serene and untroubled as a summer mornin', 'tis then I think that ignorance is foiner!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE little launch pushed steadily up the river chugging in a business-like active way although its course was like that of Coleridge on a path—Coleridge who, a friend said, was so undecided that he would go first from one side of the path to the other as if he never could make up his mind where he wanted to walk. Back and forth, now to one side now to the other of the quiet river, went the energetic little craft—for the channel was narrow, and turned and twisted like a water-snake.

The river was quietness itself now, shadowed by the great liveoaks to which the slow current pushed so close that the launch following the channel was shaded by the huge branches. On the other side would be a sunny stretch of marsh.

Occasionally a heron rose slowly, flapped her wings and flew away with a harsh scream, angry

at being disturbed. The river was of much the same aspect as in the days when the Indian's canoe slipped silently down it, the paddle making hardly more stir than the dip of a gull's wing. In Colonial days it presented a livelier aspect, being the recognized thoroughfare, since road travel was by no means easy.

Then, up and down, between the city and the great country places, went boats laden with supplies, manned by gayly clad negroes whose oars kept time to their melodies.

There were five people in the boat. The young fellow at the wheel, intent on the varying channel, his cap off and hair blown back, that was young Mr. Fielding. Beside him sat Miss Davenant, Miss Adelaide Davenant, looking more animated than Paul had ever seen her, the walnut furniture aspect quite vanished and a little faint colour in her cheeks. This mode of travel was novel and exhilarating. Next her sat a little lady in black, a slight, bent figure and a delicate eager face, a profile enough like Paul's to make one guess at relationship. Like Miss Davenant she was a bit old-fashioned as to dress, and her only adornment was a cameo

brooch that must have dated back fifty years. That was Paul's aunt, Mrs. Jacques Carleton, born Clarissa Fielding.

The middle-aged man, thin and bronzed, with the fine head and prematurely white hair, a green bag, such as lawyers carry, on his knees—that was Colonel Fielding, and the young girl with whom he was talking, apparently with great interest, was no other than the young secretary of Roseberry Gardens.

Colonel Fielding and his son had met their guests in the city, and having sent the baggage by train to the nearest point, were taking them out to Paradise Park by what Colonel Fielding considered the only proper way.

The Colonel was happy, boyishly happy, as he always was when his face was turned toward the old place. He had taken off his hat and the wind ruffled his white hair. He was talking to Miss Roberta, telling her of the places they passed, to whom belonged this and that of the manor houses of which they caught glimpses through the trees. This was Sunnymede they were passing; that was Carleton Hall—the red brick—one could see the window through which

Francis Marion jumped to escape capture by the British.

"The loveliest of the places you can't see from here: Broadacres, the old Anthony Desmond Place on the Goosecreek, but that's been bought by a Northerner."

It was as if Colonel Fielding had said "fallen into the hands of the Philistines."

"What did he do to it?" asked Roberta.

"His name is Ryan, James B. Ryan. There's a rose garden at Broadacres two hundred years old; he put concrete walks in it."

The sun was setting when the launch reached Paradise Park. A turn of the river brought it suddenly into view, and one faced squarely elaborate terraces that, like a broad stairway, descended to the water, making the river at that point a direct avenue of approach. The house was of plaster, brown, and many gabled. Two great live-oaks shadowed it from the riverside; they and the house had stood together for two hundred years and more. There was a sombreness about the house, but the setting sun touched its roof and turned to gold the tops of the tall oaks that flanked it.

In spite of the stately approach it was a crazy little wharf at which the boat made fast. Miss Adelaide looked dubiously at the few planks laid across piles which made the flooring, and finally took the chance with the air of Eliza crossing the Ohio.

Half a dozen negroes, big and little, came down to greet the arrivals. They varied in size from Calliope, who tipped the beam at two hundred, to her small, spidery-legged grandson. Calliope took voluble command of the hand luggage the boat had brought, parcelling it out according to strength and intelligence. Thus attended, the little party took their way to the house.

There is an undeniable nervousness about a new country house. It is not sure of itself. Its furnishings must be exact or the house is plainly uncomfortable. But here a pile of saddles was in the hall; beautiful old furniture associated cheerfully with new, makeshift pieces, for the house was too sure of its charm—the charm of proportion, of beautiful staircases and doorways —to be concerned about trifles. It had not the slightest touch of self-consciousness. The pine

knots blazed happily in the great fireplace; in fact, the old house was evidently glad indeed to have its people back and was doing its best to welcome them.

From the distant kitchen came the sound of Calliope scolding vociferously some of her assistants. Miss Adelaide found herself talking with Colonel Fielding and his sister as if she had always known them. She was a bit surprised, but she liked it. She liked the supper served by half a dozen negroes in procession, a tiny grandson bringing up the rear, bearing a plate of hot bread.

At heart the Northerner is much the same as the Southerner, but the luckless New Englander has self-consciousness like an ill-fitting moral corset clasped about his spirits which prevents his courtesy from ever being spontaneous and graceful, showing the warmth of the heart beneath. While Miss Adelaide played cribbage and backgammon with Colonel Fielding with much content, Paul took Roberta over the plantation, also well content with his occupation. He showed her the rice-fields and explained the work in the dykes, the difficulty

and irresponsibility of negro labour. He showed her the cabins where the men lived with their families, each having his small plot of ground, sometimes a cow of his own. Roberta was surprised to see a young bull used as a saddle horse by a negro lad.

"Aren't you afraid?" she said to him.

"Lawsy, no! I keep his min' so occupied wid ploughin' an' ridin' 'roun' he ain't got no time to git rambunctious," was the answer.

Paul, when talking to the negroes or giving them orders, dropped into the dialect so easily and completely that Roberta stared in amazement, half expecting to see he had changed colour.

"Won't they think you're making fun?" she said.

"Oh, no! They understand one better."

They came where the woods were charred and blackened and the young greens making a piteous effort to repair the damage.

"That's the sort of thing we're afraid of," said Paul.

"How did it happen?"

Paul smiled whimsically.

"I gave Jake a harmonica. It started near his cabin," said Paul; "he told me he 'dun los' that harmonica, and he bu'n de patch to fin' it.' Incidentally the woods caught fire also—but I believe he found the harmonica!"

"And what will you do to Jake?" asked Roberta.

"Build him another cabin, I reckon," he answered patiently.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE days went rapidly at Paradise Park. Miss Adelaide thawed in the warmth and sunshine—thawed visibly. She conquered her fear of the perilous wharf when bent on little expeditions with Colonel Fielding, his sister, and one or another of the kinsfolk that in the South are always accessible for such excursions. The easy and impromptu merry-makings in which half a dozen kinsfolk joined would in New England have necessitated anxious thought and care for months. They surprised and rather charmed Miss Adelaide.

Sometimes with Colonel Fielding, sometimes with Paul alone, the secretary of Roseberry Gardens rode over mile after mile of plantation and woodland. Years ago, under the first Carleton Fielding, vistas had been cut through the woods as in the forest at Fontainebleau.

"It's a new way of amusing a young lady," said Colonel Fielding to Miss Davenant, "tak-

ing her around to view drainage systems and swamps. Now, in my day a girl would sit on the piazza in a muslin frock and you'd bring her a bouquet, or she'd sit at the piano and sing."

But it wasn't all ditches. Twice they went 'coon hunting—mile after mile, through the dark fragrant woods lit uncertainly by torches carried by the negro lads, that flashed on the shining leaves of young liveoaks, and made the tall columnar pine boles flame to a dull red while in the underbrush was the rustle and flash of the dogs eager and wild with excitement.

"Br'er Coon has sho' given us the slip this time," said Meshach regretfully. "I doan see how come he did, but he's gone, an' de dogs can't find him nowhere."

"Too bad," said Roberta, but she was glad at heart that the charm of the night might stay unspoiled by the memory of bloodshed.

For Roberta, who had never been in the woods at night, was delighted with the charm of it all—the fragrance of Cherokee roses and honeysuckle blent with the tang of the resinous pine, the uncertain flare of the torches, that made an

eerie fairyland of the woods. In fact, the loss of the "coon" meant nothing to her.

"I'm not sorry," she said to Paul. "We've had the fun, and Br'er Coon has also! Let's go back."

Young Mr. Fielding had, as his father noticed, been exceptionally busy the past three months. He had gone over his heritage with a new eye, as if he were a homesteader and it was just-opened government land. He had the soil tested, and studied to find what untried crops might possibly thrive in that climate. "For," said he to himself, "if you find crops peculiarly adapted to your soil and climate you save competition and labour." He thought of raising Japanese plums, tea, or indigo like "little Eliza Pinckney," of planting mulberry trees and raising silkworms.

He turned one acre into experimental plots, holding that the only way to assure oneself conclusively that a crop will or will not grow is to try it. On his own ground Paul became vastly more interesting to young Miss Davenant.

"She sees it, father!" he explained, when the Colonel protested against ditch inspection.

"Of course, she sees it. Any one with eyesight can. It's as plain as a 'church by daylight.'"

"I mean she sees what I'm driving at," said Paul.

And she did. Although at first the charm of the gardens, their unlikeness to anything she had known, poignant beauty of the past, had allured her, and had spoken so insistently, to think of the task before the lovely old acres of meeting the exigencies of the present seemed a cruel dislocation. Later she had clearer vision, began to see how the place could meet the conditions and meet them nobly. She began to see what Paul meant to do—to keep the beautiful lines of the old gardens, and yet make them commercially profitable, to restore their beauty of the beloved acres, to keep even the effect of a stately pleasuance, and to bring back the old air of well-being and prosperity. The undertaking fascinated her.

So together they measured the old parterre, ploughed it, leaving a grass strip where a path should be, and marked the beds which were to be filled with camellias, set in nursery rows.

Together they potted hundreds of infant camellias and with the optimistic arithmetic of youth, and especially youth in agriculture, they reckoned up the proceeds of hypothetical sales which, according to their cheerful reckoning, would in a few years completely clear the plantation of its entanglements. They made thousands of box cuttings from the old hedges. That was on two rainy days.

"When they're in bloom it will be as gorgeous as your azaleas at Roseberry Gardens. And it will do no harm to sell. There will be a new crop next year. I got that idea at Roseberry Gardens. The grass path will make it a garden —without that it would be just a nursery.

"You understand now that when I saw it I had to go back. I couldn't fool any more time learning to be a landscape architect to do for other people's places, after some years of study, what this old place was fairly crying for. I want to try every possible market," he said. "Another year we'll have profits, Roberta, and as you want a garden business—come into business with me! We'll have greenhouses a-plenty in time! Don't they fairly 'holler'

to you—all those little plants we've set out, all those little camellias? Don't you want to see my parterre when it's in bloom, as full of colour as a tulip bed in April? Suppose I make a business proposition?"

And Miss Davenant, half New Englander that she was, said "she'd see."

And then, because Paul was but twenty-six and Roberta Davenant barely twenty, they forgot industry and went horseback riding through mile after mile of the level fragrant pinewood, following the merest tracks through the thick young underbrush so tall that it brushed Roberta's skirt and caught at her stirrup. They went past the ruined "quarters" beside the old race course, now a barely discernible bridle path, and explored the old landmarks.

Because for necessary lumber Paul planned to take out the trees that, in accordance with the ancient clearing, were superfluous and to reopen the "Fontainebleau vistas" made by his great-great-grandfather.

They spent many an afternoon in the spacious old gardens: the four-square rose garden, where huge ancient camellias guarded each corner; from

that opened a sunken octagonal garden and the herb garden; the flower garden, where the old-fashioned posies had once held carnival. There was the "river walk" which curved and bent, now this way, now that, following the stream's course, overlooking its wide sunlit surface, but shaded by giant live-oaks that bent their huge boughs over the water. Far more formal was the Magnolia Walk that marked the boundary of the gardens and ended at the Long Pond. Here magnolias, once close clipped, grew straight and tall on either side, forming a walk of gleaming green like a yew walk in an English garden. The long pool was rectangular, shaded by tall oaks that stood back from it, ranged in a row at a decorous distance; and, because it lay east and west, it was radiant in the morning sunlight and a bit sombre toward evening, when the long shadows lay heavily on its quiet surface. At the other end of the magnolia walk was the river path which, when the two met, bowed to a semicircle; here were seats and in the centre a sundial.

An old garden seems made for poets and lovers of romance, and yet these are made by

the garden. Whatever of poetry or romance there is in a man an old garden brings it out and awakens it. Somewhat of the beauty and charm there was in the human life of which it was once a part remains in the garden. The house, long unused, may feel dead and sombre, but in the garden the spirit stays; the belief in loveliness, of which the garden was itself an expression, lingers in the neglected borders and overgrown shrubbery. The appeal of the tiny violets and the fragrant roses is as fresh and poignant as it was a half century before, when their first blossoming was awaited eagerly by lovers long in their graves. It is the imperishableness of this earthly loveliness, fragile as it seems, that brings suddenly into being a dormant belief in other forms of loveliness; the transitory, perishable, and fleeting become the eternal and immortal. That is what an old garden does to one.

Therefore it was not strange that day after day Paul and Roberta fell under the charm. There came a day of golden sunshine—the two had ridden over the plantation in the morning for a last look, for Roberta was to go back to

Roseberry Gardens in two days, and in the afternoon were in the old gardens. They had walked along the river path, then sat on the curved seat where the path bowed out over the river. Overhead a giant oak stretched its branches. The air was still, there was no ruffling of the water, yet far above them the moss on the dark oak branches swayed and stirred.

"Let's sit and talk," Paul had said.

But it was the garden that spoke and the two young human things that listened.

"We must go back," said Roberta at last.

"But this way," said the gardens.

The late afternoon sunshine fell along the magnolia walk, touching and waking to vividness now a spray of the straggling myrtle at the foot of the wall of glossy green, now tiny pansies long gone back to wildness, now honeysuckle creeping the magnolia branches—remnants of the old border. The fragrance of the honeysuckle came to them.

Roberta stooped to pick a tiny pansy.

When she stood up Paul was facing her.

Neither knew how it happened. The garden knew. The old oaks knew perhaps, the silent,

vivid wall of magnolia may have been something of the sort before, but his hands held hers, his arms were around her, and they kissed there in the silence of the old garden, where the long shadows lay heavily.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

NOW Roberta had meant to do nothing of the sort. Late that evening she stood before the small mirror in the quaint room allotted to her, brush in hand. It was late, so late that the old house was silent, except for the slow ticking of the clock on the stairs. The candle on the bureau flickered and lightened her bright hair. It was a high, narrow bureau, of beautifully carved mahogany; the small mirror swung between two carved upright pieces, very like one in the old house at home, but the rest of the room was strangely unlike: the smoke-blackened fireplace, the low ceiling, and plastered walls. Instead of brushing her hair, Roberta was looking at a face that seemed not hers in the glass, curiously and with startled disapproval.

She had not meant to let Paul Fielding kiss her. "But you did," said Conscience, "moreover, cheerfully, easily, and I believe you would

again!" Conscience was a New Englander and uncompromising.

Roberta was doing more direct thinking than she had ever done in her life before. Life hitherto had seemed made up of things to be done, and education a matter of facts to be put into one's head. And now, instead of the slow, orderly procession of little duties, life had become a canoe in a swift current with only her own skill and adroitness to guide it. She had not supposed that the swift, unthinking action of a moment could so change the face of things, pull one's life this way or that, irrevocably. It was for her and no one else to keep a clear head and give her life intelligent direction. "That is what my mind is for," thought Roberta curiously.

She sat by the window of the queer old house, her hair braided at last, and looked out into the night.

Out of doors was flooded with moonlight. It weaved itself in and out among the huge dark branches of the great oak that almost brushed her windows, making strange, mysterious shadows. The fragrant breath of the night

came in at the window, ruffled the girl's night dress and the strands of her hair. She had not meant Paul to kiss her. "But you let him," ticked her brain relentlessly; "you would again." Even then, in the shadowy moonlight, it seemed to her that again his lips were on hers and that she was powerless to resist. She felt herself and Paul also curiously a part of the strange, weird beauty without.

Dame Nature is an old enchantress. She can weave spells more potent than ever were made about a witch's cauldron—spells composed of moonlight or starlight, of woven branches and shadowy boughs, of mystic passes of clouds over the bright moon's face, and of odours which wake the mind to remembrance or lull it to sleep. She is as unconcerned for the havoc her magic makes as was Calypso for the broken engagements of Ulysses and his proper duties in Ithaca.

But the evening and the morning differ in more ways than in the matter of light. Morning has the fresh, clear beauty of a child—quite unlike the siren loveliness of the evening, and that is why wise people reserve their decisions

until morning. There is nothing romantic about eight or nine o'clock. Those are not hours for enchantment but for disenchantment. Poetry is relegated to the background. Prose unadulterated reigns at breakfast time.

Nine o'clock the following morning found Roberta down at the end of the crazy little wharf, endeavouring to explain her position to young Mr. Fielding who was beside her, casting hook and line into the river. The fish were fairly safe, for Mr. Fielding's attention was not exclusively given to them. In fact, for a good fisherman he was casting very badly, half the time out into the sunshine when he might have seen more than one good perch had he glanced at the left of the wharf, where the shadows lay.

"Roberta," he said, "won't you look at me?"

"I have to watch my line."

"Roberta!"

"I believe I have one!"

"Roberta! I have loved you since that first May morning."

She flushed and did not answer.

"Roberta!"

She looked at him suddenly, directly, with

troubled eyes. "I'm sorry," she said; "sorry and ashamed, too. I meant nothing yesterday —not what I made you think. Can't we forget it all?"

"I shall never forget as long as I live."

"I'm sorry," she repeated. "I don't know what possessed me. It must have been the garden."

"Then let's try the garden again!" said Paul joyfully.

She shook her head hastily.

"'Fraid-cat!" scoffed young Mr. Fielding. "If you weren't afraid you'd come. It's not I you are afraid of. Is it yourself? Are you afraid of yourself, Roberta?"

"I don't know," she said honestly. "It troubles me—the whole thing—I don't want it —truly—at least not now."

A bit of Cousin Jim's wisdom floated up in Paul's mind.

"Dearest," he said, "never mind! Don't let it trouble you, whatever happens or doesn't happen. I've loved you for half a year or more, and it hasn't troubled you. I shall love you all my life, but that needn't trouble you now.

We'll go 'back to the land.' You shall concern yourself about nothing but horticulture and agriculture. But, Roberta," he added mischievously, "you know that:

"'My heart is God's little garden.'"

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

WHILE this form of horticulture was thriving in Paradise Park, at Roseberry Gardens things were going on as usual; that was the charm of the place. You might be away for ten or fifteen years and come back to find old Trommel sitting at the end of the long greenhouse grafting plants, just as you had left him.

Outside the snow lay heavily, dusting the big spruces, making the rhododendrons "look sleepy," curling their leaves. Little green and gold Japanese evergreens stiffly upright, like soldiers on parade, were gay in colour as in June. In and about the symphoricarpos bushes, the viburnums, and the black alders, flitted wrens and chickadees getting their winter rations. Sometimes, grown bold or impatient, they pecked against the greenhouse windows, "Like the Little People," said Michael, "asking to come in."

At this time business was "quiet." The work of the gardens could go on, undisturbed by shipping or packing—to Rudolph Trommel's great content. He settled himself down to his winter's work of grafting as comfortably as a woodchuck settles himself down to his winter's rest, as little concerned about the outer world. Michael was more restless, now here and now there about the houses, superintending bits of work, but always, in bad weather, at his potting bench. The office looked dingy and colourless without the young secretary. Henry Stirling, almost as much a fixture as his big desk itself, was, like the office, growing gradually older, dingier, as the bald spot was slowly encroaching on his thin, dark-brown hair.

Secure from the interruption of visitors, Mr. Horace Worthington sat in his sunny private office. The winter sunlight touched his white hair and the gold rims of his glasses. He was writing a poem on "Flora," happy, like Trommel, in the cessation of trade, for even the business of Roseberry Gardens does not always lend itself to writing poems on "Flora"; besides, conscience forbids such divertisements.

There was a knock.

The old gentleman laid down his pen—an ivory, gold-pointed one—with deliberation, for mentally, as it were, he had to ask the bright goddess to withdraw and hide herself before allowing an intruder to enter.

Michael it was, who responded to the "come in." He had some brown stems in his hand.

"'Tis Jasminum nudiflorum," he said, "and these warm days made it bud. 'Tis only right to show the plant some appreciation av its effort."

Mr. Worthington beamed as he thanked him, for the floral offering fitted in directly with his mood.

"The next warm bit we have this month," continued Michael, pleased with the success of his gift, "sh'u'd bring Mr. Herford." Michael spoke as if he were a plant.

Mr. Worthington laughed, a low silvery chuckle.

"You place him between Jasminum nudiflorum and Rhododendron Dahuricum?"

Michael thought a moment. "Yes, sir. About February come the second bit av thaw, and out comes Mr. Herford, if he's in the

counthry, to see what's started. The fur-rst makes him think: the second out he comes."

But before Mr. Herford's appearance, back came the secretary. On her desk were jasminum and forsythia forced into bloom, votive offerings from Michael. Mr. Worthington came out of his private office, and, noting the decorations, observed that it was the return of "Flora."

Michael, however, was saddened. The young secretary plunged into the accumulation of work, and it was some days before she had leisure for potting plants with Michael in his corner of the greenhouse. When finally she appeared, Michael was taciturn.

"Is it thrue?" he said at last.

"Is what true?"

"That ye've promised yerself to a b'y that can't tell ligustrum media fr'm ligustrum ibota!"

"I've promised to go in business with him, Michael, that's all. I'm going to be down there three months next winter. Mr. Worthington said I could."

Michael shook his head. "I don't like it," he said. "What's to become of my little man? What about the foine place on the Hudson ye

were to plant as ye liked? Ruin yer prospects, an' that's one thing an' 'tis bad enough, but to spile the business of Roseb'rry Gardens, too! Whativer have ye done to him?" he demanded.

"Nothing, Michael. Mr. Herford has you."

"I believe ye're takin' the lad f'r the sake av his garden."

Roberta smiled. "The garden is thrown in, Michael, and a horse and such nice dogs!"

Michael shook his head.

"After all the pains I took with yer ed-u-ca-tion."

"But you helped us wonderfully, Michael. Lots of the things we are going to try are your ideas."

"I did not ed-u-cate ye f'r that!" he denied indignantly. "I had such hopes av ye!"

"And have you none now?"

"I hope ye're a light eater," said Michael solemnly.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE spring with its charm and its feverish rush of work came and went. There were days when the little secretary lost her pretty colour and looked worn and tired from the strain.

"You should have nothing to do but pick the flowers," said Maurice Herford to her, but she shook her head.

"I like it and I want to see it through."

He went back to the houses to Michael for consolation.

"Gur-rls is curious," said Michael, "an' they're different fr'm what they used to be. 'Tis the mutation av species, Mr. Trommel says. Ye sh'u'd have set her to wor-rk, Mr. Herford, layin' out gardens or the like. She's doin' her best to l'arn the business, an' she's talkin' wid' Mr. Worthington about what they sh'u'd and what they sh'u'dn't plant down in that Carolina swamp, as if it was her own. 'Tis

too bad I didn't think the lad had wor-rk up his sleeve to offer her! 'Tis no offer av wor-rk w'u'd timpt me! I'm beginnin' to think av that chair av Horticulture and Dindrology f'r the sake av restin' me bones. Indeed, Mr. Herford, there's somethin' wrong wid the gur-rls av to-day. There's somethin' wrong wid their natural selection. Time was when 'twas enj'yment a gur-rl wanted, 'twas pleasure, 'twas pretty clothes. Now, begorr, 'tis wor-rk! 'Tis wor-rk they want, 'tis the vote they want. Their own wor-rk is not enough, 'tis the man's wor-rk they want also. Haven't ye heard thim speak about the 'right to wor-rk?'"

Mr. Herford nodded. "Yes, and I—somehow I don't quite like it."

"I know," said Michael understandingly; "ye've the old-fashioned idea av woman as an ornamint."

"I know it." Maurice Herford spoke regretfully. "One likes to see them rested and pretty, like flowers."

"I tell ye they don't recognize the wor-rd ornamental; 'tis parasites they call it, though there's a wor-rld av difference between an

ornamental an' a parasite. A parasite, as ye know, ye treat wid kerosene emulsion, or arsenate of lead—the wan thing is to be rid av it, but an ornamental—it's the pride av the gardens! What are roses, what are azaleas an' rhodydendrons, what, in fact, is the Venus de Milo hersilf an' some av the saints av Hiven but ornamentals? However, gu-rls 'll not be ornamentals. 'Tis street trees, as it were, they'll be, gooseb'ry bushes an' apple trees, windbreaks an' hedges, an' sustainin' oaks. But d'ye know what will come? I've heard thim Votes f'r Women speakers! Indeed, they can talk foine. 'Can woman do a man's wor-rk?' 'Yis,' says they (an' 'yis' says I, too). An' will they vote betther? They say 'tis thrue. Iv'ry kind av corruption will disappear. 'More power thin to thim,' says I. But f'r you an' me the day whin women have the vote—'twill be the day av our emancipation. Min have been downthrodden an' driven, kept wid the nose to the grindstone till the physiognomy av the Irishman shows it, kept wid a string to the pay envelope. 'He that has wife an' child has given hostages to Fortune.' Ye know it all. Thin,

'twill be changed. Ye'll see how they'll blossom. Thin, serene in the assurance that the government is being run right, unthroubled by economic pressure, min will be free and flower-like as ye say. Min will reinforce the deserted ranks av the ornamentals! I'm wonderin' whether whin women have the vote I sh'u'd buy me a shamrock-green coat or a plaid wan. An' yersilf, Mr. Herford, ye sh'u'd wear ruffles at yer sleeve an' velvet. 'Twill be a great day!"

Mr. Herford laughed. "You should be an orator, Michael."

"I've had some thoughts av it," returned Michael complacently, "but I'll wait till I'm restin' me bones in that chair av Horticulture and Dindrology at the college."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

"HOPE you are satisfied, child," said Major Pomerane to Roberta, "and have enough on your shoulders."

"Almost," said Roberta.

"The talent some people have for finding chores!" he said disgustedly. "I never wanted to do anything down there but have a right good time and shoot. You New Englanders are the limit for finding duties. I believe when you get up to heaven instead of leaving such matters to the angels you'll set about dusting the gates and polishing the golden streets."

"But this is fun, Uncle Jim, the best fun I've had for a long time. Come down and see."

"Humph!" grunted the Major. "I've not much use for this crazy farm-superintendent Ceres and Flora business. Prosperine, that's the part—— Which of the old fossils is Pluto, I wonder? Trommel, I suppose. He looks as if he might go down under the oak roots at

night. Why don't you marry Paul and be done with it?"

"Maybe I will," said Miss Davenant serenely, "but if we can't work together for three months, why plan to do it for always?"

"There's something in that," admitted the Major; "young folk nowadays are so confoundedly calculating! I agree with old Horace out at the Gardens, that romance is dead!"

Roberta laughed softly. "Don't tell, Uncle Jim but—truly it isn't!"

With that she left him. The Major watched her go down the path, through the shrubbery, and heard the gate click of the Davenant garden. Then he took up his pipe and resumed his book.

To "old Horace," as Major Pomerane irreverently called him, with his liking for novelty and experiment, the idea of restoring the old gardens and at the same time making them commercially profitable was fascinating.

"There is no reason," he declared, "why any agricultural experiment should not be arranged with an eye to beauty. I believe the famous rose gardens of the Vale of Cashmere

were commercial. We have too long associated utility with ugliness, and borne ugliness that had the excuse of utility or commercial value. Yet merely a little attention to balance and proportion, and plenty of green to keep it restful and any place can be made beautiful."

He looked down the grass path bordered by many-hued Iris.

> "'Thy gardens and thy goodly walks
> Continually are green.'"

he quoted to Roberta, who was speaking of this parterre. "Saint Bernard, you observe, believed in grass walks in a garden! Your parterre will be very beautiful—it will look like a Holland nursery in tulip time."

Instead of a long summer dallying with work at Roseberry Gardens, Paul Fielding was but three weeks there, stayed with Major Pomerane, and spent every spare moment at the gardens, this time in genuine study.

Even Michael grudgingly admitted that he was learning and melted to showing him some details of the greenhouse work.

"Comin' here f'r somethings he wants to know," said Michael, "is a different matther fr'm visitin' around an' expectin' the information to fly up an' soak in. 'Tis like goin' to a spigot f'r a dhrink whin ye're thirsty, turnin' it on an' holdin' yer cup instead of standin' out in the rain wid yer mouth open!"

The old gardens at Paradise Park began to smile as they had not done for many a year. Rows and rows of scarlet camellias filled the great parterre in front of the broad terrace. In the ancient rose gardens were hundreds of thrifty young ones, grown from cuttings of cantifolia, Wm. Allen Richardson, Reine Henrietta; but the sundial in the centre, the grass paths which divided the garden into four square beds, the great camellias at each corner kept it a garden, rather than a plantation. In the old kitchen garden were thousands of little box plants like regiments of tiny green soldiers.

In the more out of the way gardens were experiments—tea, indigo, young Japanese plum trees, and a few mulberry trees for silkworms.

It was impressibly charming to Roberta to

see the vision gradually taking shape, the dream garden coming true as the beautiful lines of the old place reasserted themselves, just as a painting might be restored that had been stained and painted over.

Sometimes a slight change would make definite a value such as restoring the mate of a cedar tree where two had stood guardians of a path. Whenever wood was cut of necessity, it was done where trees had grown up, blocking the old vistas. Azaleas, clipped and sent in hampers to be sold, were cut where the bushes had to be pruned—a trick Roberta had learned from Trommel—so that gradually the thick masses of azaleas on each side of the long path became trim as a wall of ilex or a hedge of English yew.

The business was coming, too. Boxes of holly and mistletoe and smilax went North for Christmas. The holly, instead of being shipped loose, was made into wreaths, and there were wreaths, too, of pine cones and moss.

"They bring more sent that way," said Miss Davenant, who had not been Michael O'Connor's pupil for nothing! There were bundles of pitch-pine "light wood" made into bundles

tied with sprigs of holly and shipped north to crackle and flame in open fireplaces at Christmas time.

Every crop of any possible value was sent to a market and tried. Colonel Fielding looked on with rather amused interest—there was nothing Paul did not want to try—mulberries and silkworms, roses, indigo, tea, Japanese plums. Straight market gardening did not interest him.

One of Mr. Worthington's ideas was to study your soil and study the neighbouring soil which very often contains the exact medicine your soil needs. So he analyzed, and had muck from the swamp carted into his gardens.

Presently the old place began to thrive and take heart again. Of all the tentative experiments, the most definitely successful was the rose growing, and five years later Paradise Park came into fame with a new rose—a cross between the Cherokee and one of the hardy Japanese Wichuraiana, a rose which had the delicate loveliness of the Cherokee with the Wichuraiana's hardiness. But that is another story and a later one, it was as yet only a dream. The next summer Paul came back to Roseberry Gardens.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

PAUL had sent no word of his coming, "things that just happen are the best," he said to himself. But he rode out to Roseberry Gardens before any one was astir but the blackbirds and orioles.

When he passed through the gateway in the hedge where in the spring magnolias hold up their creamy chalices to the sun like great bridal roses, the broad grass walk stretched green and glistening in the sunlight, the azaleas had passed, but great squares of rhododendrons flared as if they had caught the sunrise and were reflecting its crimson and rose. It was early in the morning—earlier even than old Trommel, and the garden was silent except for the thrushes that were singing their exquisite antiphonal, while, unimpressed by the melody, a gorgeously handsome blue-jay perched on a nearby magnolia branch and scolded.

"Br'er Jay, I reckon your name's Michael," laughed young Mr. Fielding.

It was too early even for Roberta, so he took the narrow wood path that Roberta had taken that May morning two years ago when she disappeared from his view. The path led through the dogwoods where that other morning blossoms laid like snow on the dark level branches, black and gleaming in the early sunshine, past the "Pyrus Section" he went, toward the farm and the "violet road" where the little rabbits lay hidden. He would walk until Roberta came out, for it was his fancy to see her there with the flowers and the green hedge for a background, not in the dingy office. Besides, there was Michael!

He sat down under the big linden, took off his hat, and looked away to the meadows and the little creek that went in and out the shining marshes like the river at Paradise Park; at last he saw the groups of men approaching. "Past seven," he said to himself, and went rapidly back the dogwood path. "I wonder——" Then he caught a glimpse of her bright head as she passed through the hemlock gateway.

She bent over an azalea for a moment, then walked slowly, looking evidently at plant after plant, and did not see him where he stood by the magnolias until very close.

"Roberta!" he said. She stopped suddenly, and the colour flamed in her face.

"You!" she cried, and went to him quickly, with both hands outstretched. "Oh, Paul!" she said, but no more, for his arms were around her and her speech was stopped for a long moment.

Then she pushed him back, a slim brown hand on each shoulder.

The thrushes had stopped singing, only the blue-jay remained, scolding over his late breakfast.

"Are you really back?" she said.

"Such a foolish question," scolded the blue-jay.

But Paul Fielding laughed happily.

"My garden is growing! The silver bells and cockle-shells are all in a row!" he said. "Will you come?"

"Yes," she said.

"And soon—very soon?"

"As soon as you like," she said. "But, Paul, I want you to know one thing: it would have been the same if the garden hadn't grown."

He kissed her again. "You darling!" Then hand in hand, like two children, they went back together down the broad grassy path between the flaming rhododendrons. At the gateway Michael confronted them.

"The Angel at the gate of Paradise," said young Mr. Fielding.

"I've been lookin' all over f'r yez, Miss Davenant," Michael said, looking keenly at the young secretary and throwing a disapproving glance at her companion.

The secretary flushed as deeply as one of the rose-pink azaleas.

"Michael, dear," she said, "won't you wish me happiness?"

Michael hesitated, looked at the pair, and then his infectious smile irradiated his face.

"Shure and I wish ye all the happiness in the wor-rld, Miss Davenant, and ye, too," he added, turning to Paul.

"Really, Roberta," said Major Pomerane,

"you ought to have the old fossils for bridesmaids. Think how appropriate it would be! Drape 'em in togas and set a fashion! I certainly ought to be Paul's best man! But one must not expect gratitude of youth!" he said resignedly. "That's what old Horace says."

And Maurice Herford? He bought plants as of old, after the bright-haired secretary had gone, but absent-mindedly, coming out, as if from habit, to the garden which seemed more dreamily quiet than ever.

"'Tis a bit lonesome," said Michael, interpreting the other's thoughts.

Maurice Herford nodded. The two were standing by Michael's potting bench.

"'Tis a shame! I thought she had more sinse!"

"He has youth," said Herford sadly.

"So's a Carolina poplar," retorted Michael; "an' who wants it but a real estate agent! W'u'd you compare it wid a Quercus robur or a Platanus Orientalis? 'Tis not intelligence, 'tis not ch'ice, 'tis propinquity—heathen deity that makes a lot av trouble. Take a b'y and a gur-rl

an' a bit av fine scenery or moonshine, an' all ye need to ask is 'whin?'"

"I had no chance anyway," said Maurice Herford.

"Ye had chance afther chance, Mr. Herford," said Michael pityingly, "but ye didn't see thim. Indeed life is like one av them merry-go-rounds. There's a ring ye try f'r, an' while ye're planning jest how to pick it off wid the p'int of yer stick, whist! ye've gone by an' another lad has it. 'Tis not the best nor the cleverest that gets it, but the wan that grabs at just the right moment.

"Indeed plants is better than people. Take a good sort, plant it and tend it and it will be there to smile at ye year in and year out and not chasin' off with any green lad av a buddin' gardener!"

He brushed the soil from his fingers, untied his apron, hung it up, and turned with his beaming smile to Maurice Herford.

"What's a gur-rl!" he said blithely. "Come out and see me new azalea!"

THE END

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